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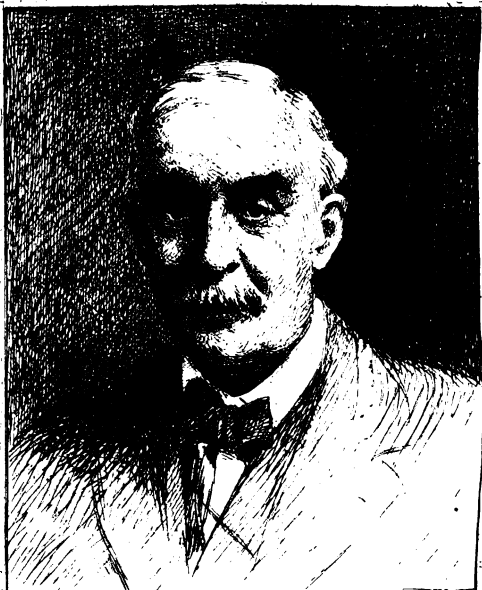
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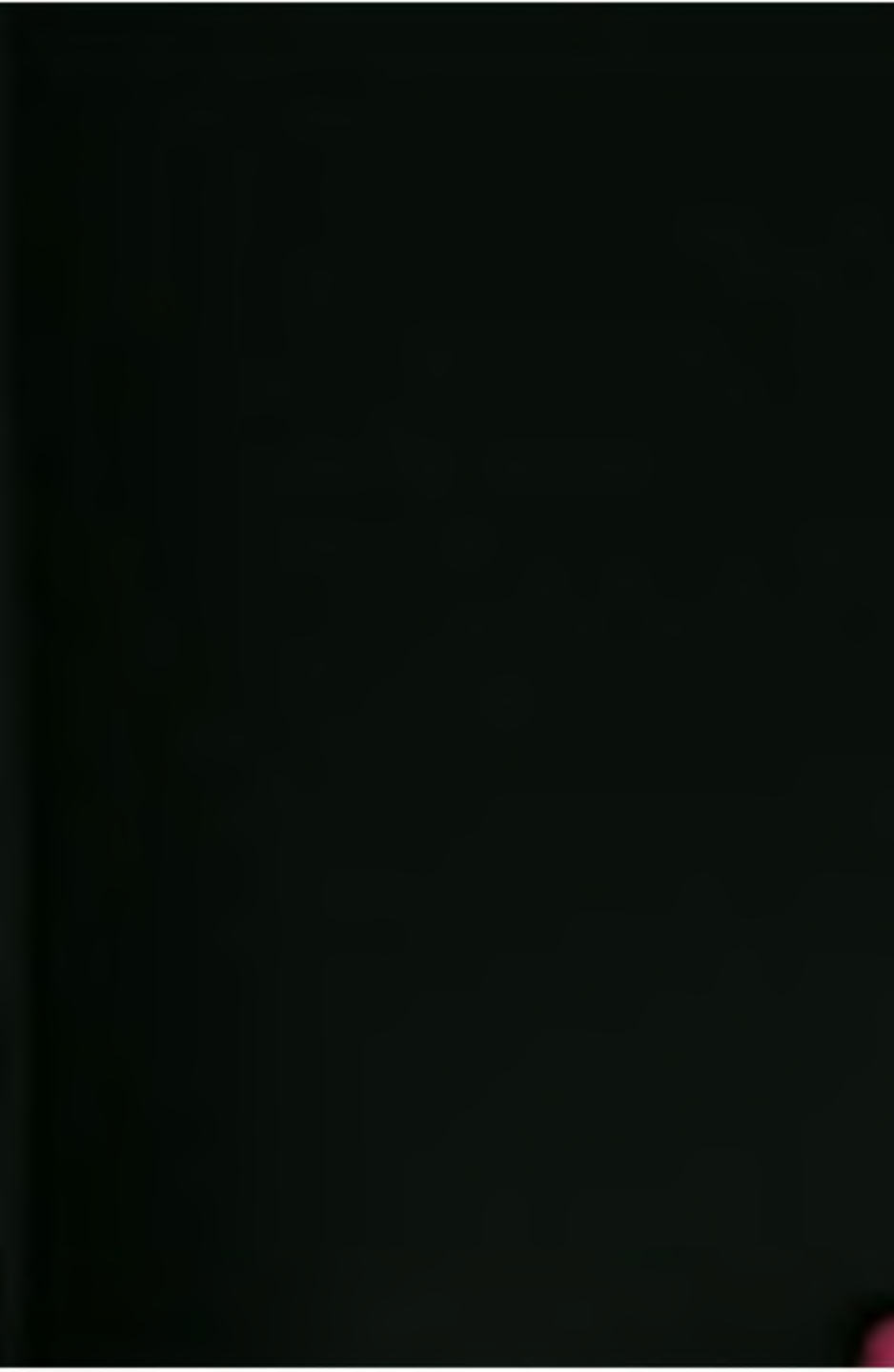
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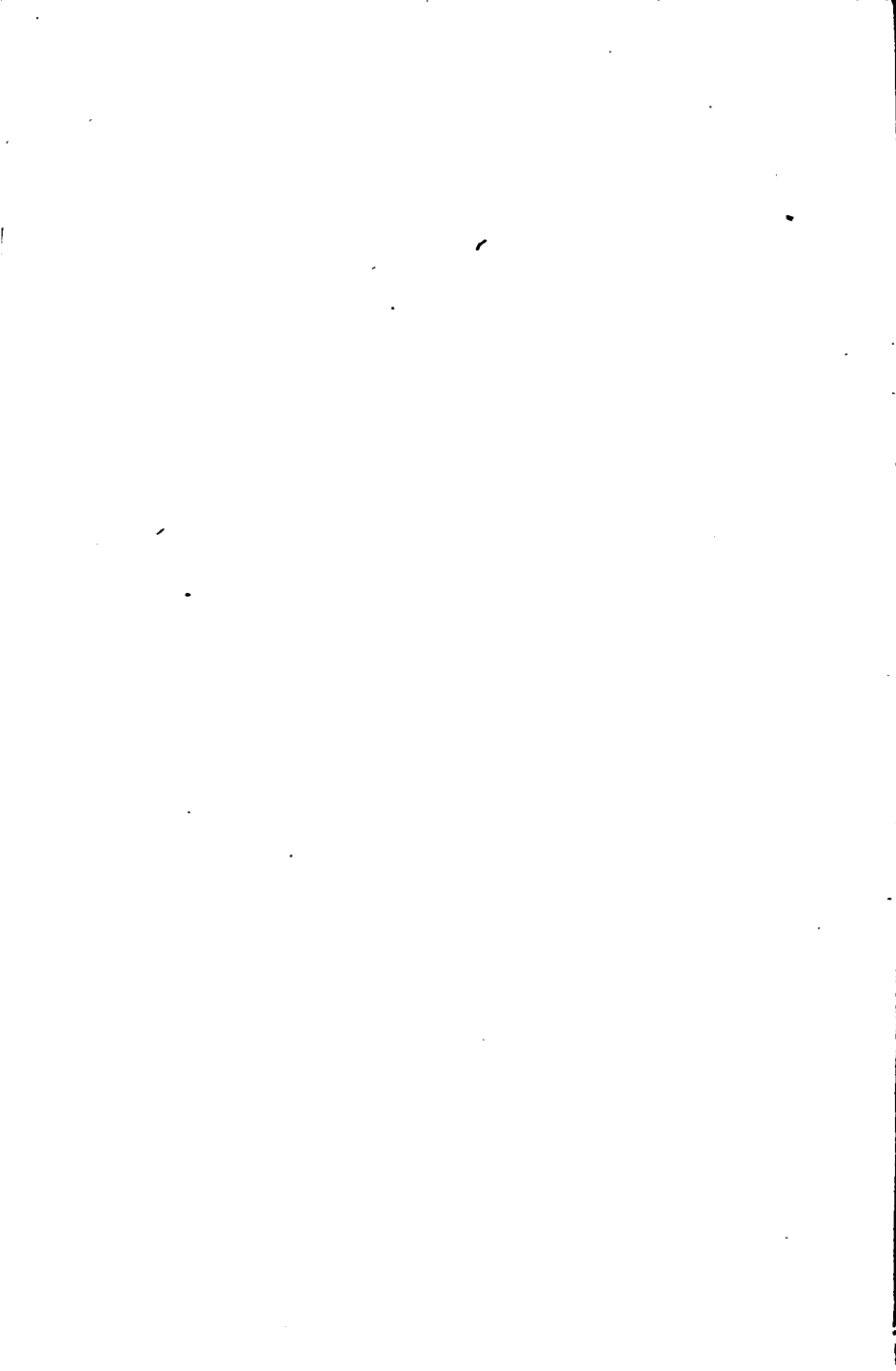


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**THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY**



THE  
TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

BEING AN  
EXAMINATION OF THE MORE IMPORTANT  
ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST  
BELIEVING IN THAT  
RELIGION

COMPILED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES BY

MAJOR <sup>William</sup> W. H. TURTON

ROYAL ENGINEERS

LONDON  
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER, & CO. LTD  
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## PREFACE

A FEW words of explanation are necessary in publishing this Essay. For many years I have been engaged, off and on, in discussing the subjects here treated of, and have of course kept notes of the more important arguments on both sides. By degrees these became voluminous, and had to be arranged in different groups; but as I had no intention of publishing them, I kept no record as to where the arguments came from, or how far they were copied either in words or substance. Under these circumstances I have naturally hesitated to publish the book, but have at length decided to do so, more especially as the writer to whom I feel most indebted, the late Mr. G. Warrington, has himself adopted a somewhat similar method. In his Introduction to *When was the Pentateuch Written?* after mentioning the books he has most consulted, he says, "Critics who are acquainted with these works will easily recognise how much is borrowed from them and how much is original. For the ordinary reader, and the general purposes of the book, the matter is one neither of interest nor consequence." Feeling that the same applies in this case, I will merely add that the present Essay, the publication

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of which has been delayed for some years through ill-health, only claims to be a compilation, and that the works to which I feel most indebted are—

*Paley's* "Natural Theology" and "Christian Evidences."

*Warrington's* "Can we Believe in Miracles?" "When was the Pentateuch Written?" and "The Week of Creation."

*Salmon's* "Introduction to the New Testament."

*Row's* "Christian Theism," "Manual of Christian Evidences."

And the "Transactions of the Victoria Institute."

I may add that the references to the Bible are all to the Revised Version (R.V.), and not to the Authorised Version (A.V.).

W. H. T.

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# THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

## BOOK I

### THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

#### CHAPTER I

##### THAT THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE HAD AN ORIGIN

###### INTRODUCTION.

Difference between demonstration and proof.

###### (A.) MEANING OF PRESENT PROPOSITION.

Explanation of the material universe, its origin, and a Free Force.

###### (B.) THE PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT IN ITS FAVOUR.

If the universe had not an origin, it seems to necessitate that matter is infinite in amount, or else that all events form a recurring series; both of which appear incredible. So we adopt the other alternative, that the universe had an origin.

###### (C.) THE SCIENTIFIC ARGUMENT IN ITS FAVOUR.

From the process of evolution and the dissipation of energy. Conclusion.

It is proposed in this essay to consider the reasons for and against believing in the truth of Christianity, meaning by that term, as will be explained later, the statements contained in the Three Creeds. And it may be well to point out at starting the kind of proof which can be given of such a subject. Now it is possible to convince a person of the truth of anything by two methods of argument, which may be called a demonstration and a proof.

By a *Demonstration* is meant a line of reasoning which, to any one able to understand it, is at once conclusive. It admits of no degree, but must necessarily start from axioms of some kind, and the propositions of Euclid afford a good example of this kind of argument. A demonstration is thus showing that one fact must necessarily follow from another; and of course, if the axioms from which a demonstration starts are *necessarily* true, all the deductions from them are necessary truths also. For instance, it appears to most men that the axioms of Euclid are necessary truths, and consequently that it is also a necessary truth that any two sides of a triangle are together greater than the third.

On the other hand, what we have called a *Proof* is quite different from this. It means a line of reasoning which shows that any fact or statement is more likely to be true than false. It is therefore entirely a question of probability, and different persons may differ as to any fact being proved. For example, what is called the law of gravitation has been proved to most persons; that is to say, the reasons for thinking that matter does attract other matter in this way appear completely to overbalance the reasons for thinking it does not. All historical questions, as well as those of natural science, are plainly capable of being proved only. And it is equally plain that a proof is always open to further consideration if fresh evidence is produced, whereas a demonstration is not. And thus a proof, however strong, can never theoretically amount to a certainty. But it can do so practically, for we feel just as sure that a stone will fall to the ground as of any proposition of Euclid. The explanation of this seems to be that the human mind is incapable of distinguishing between absolute certainty and an extremely high degree of probability.

Passing on now to the *Truth of Christianity*, it appears to the writer that anything like a demonstration is out of the question. It might of course be given by assuming a sufficient set of axioms to start from, but this would be practically useless. On the other hand, a proof or disproof appears to be attainable; for when the arguments on both sides are carefully examined, there may appear to most persons to be a decided balance

of probability one way or the other. And this is the investigation we propose to conduct.

As, then, the question is entirely one of *probability*, we must first explain what is meant by the terms denoting degrees of probability, which are impossible, possible, credible, probable, and certain. And if we adopt the convenient method of expressing probability by means of a fraction, we may define them as follows. By *impossible* is meant that the probability of the statement or event being true is 0; by *possible*, that it is greater than 0; by *credible*, that it is greater than  $\frac{1}{100}$ ; by *probable*, that it is greater than  $\frac{1}{2}$ , *i.e.*, it is more likely to be true than false; and by *certain*, that it is 1. The meaning of these terms is obvious, with the exception of credible. The distinction between this and possible is of course arbitrary, but it is convenient to have some distinction. For an event may not be, strictly speaking, impossible, and yet be so extremely improbable as to make it useless to expect any one to believe it. For instance, a contradiction in terms, or anything contrary to necessary truth, such as the diagonal of a square being shorter than its sides, is impossible. But that a pair of unloaded dice should fall sixes on five previously specified occasions, or that a man should walk twenty miles in an hour, is certainly not impossible, though every one will admit that it is incredible. With these preliminary remarks we will now pass on to the subject before us, which has been divided into four books and twenty-five chapters.

#### (A.) MEANING OF PRESENT PROPOSITION.

We will not attempt here or elsewhere to give any strict definition of the terms employed, unless absolutely necessary. Such definitions are seldom of much use, since one term can only be defined by reference to others, the meaning of which may also be doubtful. All we shall do, therefore, is to give an explanation of the sense in which the terms are used, which, it is thought, will be sufficient for all practical purposes.

Now by the *material universe* is meant the sum-total of all the matter in the universe, including the stars and other celestial bodies. It therefore includes everything that exists, with the exception of immaterial or spiritual beings, if there

are any such. And by this universe having had an *origin* is meant that it was at some time acted on by a *Free Force*; that is to say, by a force which does not always and necessarily act the same under the same circumstances, but which is able to act or not as it pleases. Of course such a force is totally different from all the known forces of nature, such as gravity; but there is no difficulty in understanding what is meant by the term, since man himself seems to possess such a force in his own free will. We are not assuming that man's will is really free, but merely that the idea of a free force, able to act or not as it pleases, is well known to man and generally understood.

Hence the statement that the material universe had an origin means that at some time or other it was acted on by such a Free Force; in other words, it has not existed eternally under fixed laws without any external interference, nor have subsequent events always been a necessary consequence of previous events. And if it be objected that a free force may have acted on the universe several times, we will call the earliest time its *origin*. And if it be further urged that such a force may have been eternally acting—though this would, strictly speaking, prevent the universe having had an origin—it will be seen in the next chapter that it leads to practically the same conclusions. Having now explained what is meant by the material universe having had an origin, we will consider the two arguments in its favour, which may be conveniently called the Philosophical and the Scientific argument.

(B.) THE PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT.

By this is meant that, when we reflect on the subject, it seems inevitable that if the universe had not an origin, either matter must be infinite in amount, or else all events must form part of a recurring series; both of which appear incredible. The reason for thinking this is, that if all free force is excluded, it is plain that matter must be eternal, since its coming into existence at any time could not have been a necessity, and must therefore have resulted from some free force. And it is equally plain that what we call the forces



of nature and the properties of matter must also be eternal, since any alteration in them at any time would also have required a free force. Suppose now we were able to calculate the past history of our earth. We might find that it has taken so many thousands of years to get into its present condition since it first became a separate planet, and perhaps so many thousands of years previously in condensing from a nebula. But these operations, and every conceivable operation, must have taken time, and not eternity. And the same is true of the whole universe, and the time during which it was in each state might be calculated. And therefore, if the universe is eternal, these states must be infinite in number; and if no free force has ever acted on it, they must be either all *different* or else *recurring*.

The first theory is most improbable, for it seems to necessitate, among other things, that the matter forming the universe should be *infinite* in amount, which is scarcely conceivable. The stars of heaven may be as numerous as the grains of sand on the sea-shore, but were they a million times as many, their number would still be finite and not infinite; and if so, they cannot have kept changing their position eternally without at some time coming back to a previous position, when, if all free force is excluded, they must have repeated the same changes as before. Nor is the question altered by our assuming that space is infinite. For if matter is finite, the universe as a whole must occupy a certain finite space, and its position as to surrounding space does not affect it at all. It is only affected by the relative position of its component parts, such as the sun and stars; and these cannot have been eternally changing. Anyhow, this theory seems extremely improbable; though even were we to adopt it, it would not in any way disprove that the universe had an origin; it would merely leave the question to be decided by other arguments.

The second theory of a *recurring series* is theoretically possible. For example, if we assume that the universe will in process of time work itself back into precisely the same condition in which it was long ago as a nebula or anything

else, when it will necessarily recommence precisely the same changes as before, then, and only then, is it possible that it has been going on doing so from all eternity. But this theory, though possible, is certainly not credible. For it plainly requires that all events, past, present, and future, have occurred, and will occur, an infinite number of times. And when applied to a single example, say the history of the human race, this is seen to be quite incredible. Or, to put the argument in other words, if all free force is excluded from the universe, no *new* event can happen *now*. For every event which the forces of nature could possibly bring about of themselves would, since they have been acting from eternity, have been brought about long ago. Therefore present events are not new, but part of a recurring series.

We are hence driven to the third alternative, which is that the universe has not existed eternally under fixed laws and without any external interference; in other words, that it had an *origin*. No doubt there are difficulties in regard to this theory also, but they do not seem to be nearly so great as those in regard to the previous ones, and are mostly due to our ignorance. We may not know, for instance, whether matter itself is eternal, or whether it began to exist in some manner inconceivable to us at the origin of the universe. Nor may we know how, on the former supposition, the Originating Force acted, whether by causing matter to then assume its present properties, or by altering the conditions under which it was placed. But either case would be equivalent to a new force being brought to bear on the previous universe, which would necessarily bring about a series of new results; and this is precisely what we have to account for. Nor, again, may we have any idea as to why, if a free force once acted on the universe, it never apparently does so at present; still less can we picture to ourselves what such a free force would be like, though the difficulty here is no greater than that of picturing a force which is not free, say gravity.

But our ignorance about all this is no reason for doubting what we do know. And it appears to the writer that we

do know that, unless matter is infinite in amount, which seems incredible, or unless present events form a recurring series, which seems equally so, the universe cannot have existed eternally without some *Free Force* having acted on it at some time. In short, it seems less difficult to believe that the universe had an origin than to believe that it had not.

(C.) THE SCIENTIFIC ARGUMENT.

And this conclusion is greatly strengthened by two scientific theories now generally accepted — that of the process of evolution and the dissipation of energy. The former seems to show that the universe had a beginning a certain number of years ago; and the latter, that it will have an end a certain number of years hence. And either of these, if admitted, is sufficient to establish the point.

The subject of *Evolution* is discussed in chap. iii. All that need be said here is, that, however complete and unbroken it may be, it still requires a *Free Being* or *Force* to originate it. For unless it is in a recurring series, which is plainly untenable, it must have begun with a *Something* which was not itself the product of evolution. For if there had not been such a something, there would have been nothing to evolve from; and if it had been itself evolved, it would not have been the commencement of evolution. Now the commencement by this unknown something of the course of evolution must have been due to a *Free Force* somewhere; in other words, the atoms of the universe with their evolving properties cannot have existed eternally, for then the course of evolution would have commenced in the eternal past, and would therefore have been finished now. But this is certainly not the case, and evolution is still in progress. And therefore, as a state of progress cannot be eternal, it must have had a commencement. So that evolution necessarily assumes a previous *Evolver*; it cannot originate itself.

Of course we can never have any scientific knowledge as to how the universe originated. For the record of nature about itself, which is all we can study, has been well compared to an autobiography, and this can never go back to

birth. But still we may have no doubt that it had a beginning at some time, and that this beginning was not a necessity but was due to some Free Force.

The other theory, that of the *Dissipation of Energy*, is that the universe seems to be progressing towards a state of final uniformity of heat. And when this has been reached, and all matter has the same temperature, it will be in a condition from which it cannot raise itself again. Or, to otherwise express it, all energy tends to heat, and heat tends to equal distribution; whereas its power of doing work depends on its not being equally distributed. We need not go into the proofs of this theory, as it is generally admitted by scientific men, but will only point out that it is not in any way opposed to the other and equally well-established theory of the *Conservation of Energy*.

An analogy may be useful here. Suppose a man had 10,000 coins, varying from sovereigns, to farthings, and amounting altogether to £500; and then suppose he was allowed to change these for other coins, equal in number and in total value, but of intermediate amounts to those which he gave. For instance, he gives a half-crown and sixpence for a florin and shilling, or a penny and two farthings for three halfpennies. It is clear that if he went on long enough he would eventually have nothing but shillings, when his power of exchanging would come to an end, though the total value of his money would have been the same all along. Similarly the energy of the universe is *conserved* as to its quantity, and yet *dissipated* or equalised as to what we may call its quality.

Now the bearing of this on our present subject is quite plain. For let this complete dissipation of energy take any number of millions of years, they are yet nothing to eternity. And therefore, if the material universe with all its present forces existed from eternity, and without any external interference, it must have been reduced to this state long ago. So that if this theory is correct, it seems not only probable, but certain, that the universe had an origin.

Before concluding this chapter, an objection has to be

considered. It may be said that the above reasoning is merely another form of the old argument, "Everything must have a cause, and therefore there must have been a First Cause;" the obvious answer to which is, that then the First Cause must also have had a cause, and so on indefinitely. But this is not the case. For we are not here assuming that a cause is necessary to account for mere existence, or even for mental action, such as the Free Force deciding to originate the universe; but only for *material action*, such as the changes in the universe itself. This is an important difference, for neither existence nor mental action appears to require a cause in the same way that material action does. They are not felt to be effects, but may be ultimate facts; the existence being independent of anything else, and the resolve to originate the universe freely formed by the mind itself. On the other hand, that matter should start moving without a cause seems to most persons incredible.

This objection, then, cannot be maintained, and we therefore conclude that the material universe had an *origin*. And all we know at present about the Force which originated it is that it was a *Free Force*, capable of and exercising volition. And the conclusion at which we have arrived may be concisely expressed by saying, that before all causes of a physical kind which acted necessarily there was a First Cause of a mental kind which acted voluntarily.

## CHAPTER II

### THAT THIS ORIGIN WAS DUE TO A CREATOR

(A.) THE ORIGINATING CAUSE WAS SINGLE.

This is shown by the unity of nature : some examples.

(B.) THE ORIGINATING CAUSE WAS SUPERNATURAL.

Explanation of laws of nature, natural forces, a supernatural force.

(C.) MEANING OF CREATOR.

(A.) THE ORIGINATING CAUSE WAS SINGLE.

We decided in the last chapter that the material universe had an origin, meaning thereby that there was a time in its past history when it was acted on by some Free Force, which may be described as its *First Cause*. We have now to consider whether this was a *Single Cause*; and this can scarcely be doubted, for modern science has completely established the unity which pervades the universe.

For example, the same *materials* seem to be used throughout. The spectrum analysis has shown conclusively that many of the elements which exist on this earth are found also in the sun and stars. And this alone is a strong mark of unity. Next there is the force of *gravity*, which is all-embracing. It applies equally to the most distant stars and to the most minute objects on this earth, so that the same force which causes the double stars to revolve round each other causes a stone to fall to the ground. So here we have another great feature common to the whole universe. Yet another is afforded by the *luminiferous æther*. The existence of some such medium is now generally recognised, as the arguments in its favour are very strong. And we seem forced to believe that there exists throughout the universe a kind of

æthereal atmosphere, which embraces it all and holds it together. Moreover, it is the medium of radiant heat, as well as of light, and doubtless plays some part in magnetism, electricity, and chemical affinity. Here then in this ubiquitous æther we have another great mark of unity.

Many others might be given, but enough has been said to show that the popular idea that the universe is one whole, which is expressed by the very word universe, is abundantly justified by science. And this unity plainly points to the unity of the Originating Cause. For if there had been *several* causes, they could not have acted in the same way by chance or of necessity, and must therefore have done it by agreement. And a Single Cause seems far more probable than a number of independent causes thus agreeing to act together.

(B.) THE ORIGINATING CAUSE WAS SUPERNATURAL.

Before explaining what is meant by this, we must consider somewhat carefully the terms laws of nature and natural forces. Now by a *law of nature* is meant an observed uniformity of natural phenomena when we are ignorant of its cause. For example, it is called a law or rule of nature that, with certain specified exceptions, heat should expand bodies, which merely means that we know it does so, and do not know why it does so; in other words, we observe that heat is nearly always followed by expansion, and we therefore assume that the one is the cause of the other, though, strictly speaking, science knows nothing of causation. It only knows of antecedents and consequents, and not why the one follows the other.

The laws of nature are thus quite different from *necessary truths*. As has been well said, a sufficiently clever man, if shut up alone and given the axioms and definitions of Euclid, might work out all the propositions by himself. But no man could tell *a priori* how a lump of sugar would act when put into a cup of tea; this can only be decided by observation. A law of nature, then, is a convenient term for an observed uniformity of effect of whose cause we are ignorant. This latter provision is of course only for convenience; for when we know the probable cause of any effect, it is no longer necessary to call it a law of nature; it then becomes a

mere deduction from some more general law. Thus we do not call it a law of nature that the planets move round the sun in approximate ellipses, nor that a stone falls to the ground, since they are both necessary deductions from the more general law of gravitation. And perhaps some day gravitation itself will be seen to be a deduction from some still more general law; and in this way the number of the laws of nature may be greatly reduced. But even if they were all reduced to one, this one would not be a necessary truth, and all our present laws of nature would not be necessary truths either, though they might be necessary deductions from the first law.

It should also be noticed that a law of nature cannot *effect* anything. It has no coercive power whatever. The law of gravitation, for instance, has never moved a planet, any more than the rules of navigation have steered a ship. In each case it is some power or force acting according to law which does it. And this leads us on to consider the forces of nature.

Now by a *natural force* is meant a force which always acts in accordance with some fixed law. For example, the forces of gravity, of chemical affinity, of light, and of heat are natural forces. As far as we know, they are always present under the same conditions, and their action is always the same. They are incapable of volition, incapable of acting or not as they like; they must always and invariably act the same under the same circumstances.

And this is what is meant by the *uniformity of nature*. It does not mean the uniform recurrence of the same phenomena; for a transit of Venus or a conjunction of planets, which happens occasionally or only once, is just as truly part of the uniform course of nature as the regular succession of day and night. But it means that the elementary items out of which phenomena are composed are invariable. Every event is, in common language, the result of the action of certain forces on certain matter, and it is this action which is considered to be invariable. And since, as a rule, many kinds of matter are acted on by many kinds of force, and in varying proportions of one and the other, it gives rise to an almost endless variety of phenomena. All that is asserted is, that the method in



which they are brought about—in other words, the causation of these phenomena—is uniform, each being the direct, necessary, and only possible result of the matter and forces concerned in its production. Thus natural forces, as said above, have no freedom of choice, and are bound to act as they do. The only exception, either real or apparent, to this kind of force at the present time is the *free will* of man and other beings, which seems to act voluntarily and without any fixed law.

Now by a *Supernatural Force* is meant a Force different in this respect from all natural forces, and similar in kind to the apparent free will of man; and, as we have shown, the Force which originated the universe was necessarily of such a character. It was thus no kind of gravitation, no molecular attraction, no chemical affinity. All these and all similar forces would always act the same under the same conditions; whereas the Force we are considering was of precisely an opposite character. It was a Free Force, a Force which voluntarily chose to originate the universe at a certain definite time. And calling this Force Supernatural is merely to emphasise this striking difference from all natural forces.

(C.) MEANING OF THE TERM CREATOR.

The position in the argument at which we have now arrived is this: we have shown that the material universe had an origin at some time, and that the Force which caused this origin was a Free Force; and we have shown that this First Cause was probably Single, and certainly Supernatural. Now we will call this *Single Supernatural Cause* which originated the universe its *Creator*, and hence the proposition at the head of this chapter follows at once. And it is obvious that all present phenomena in the universe are due ultimately to the Creator's action in originating it, though there may be, or may have been, other causes acting as well. Everything has thus a supernatural origin, if we trace it far enough back. And if it be objected, as said in chap. i., that the universe may have had no origin, owing to some Free Force having been eternally acting upon it, such a Force must also be Single and Supernatural, and therefore may equally well be called its Creator.

## CHAPTER III

### THAT THE CREATOR DESIGNED THE UNIVERSE

(A.) MEANING OF DESIGN.

Originating combined with foreknowledge.

(B.) EVIDENCE OF DESIGN.

Seems overwhelming throughout organic nature; and we are not appealing to it to show the Creator's existence, but merely His foreknowledge.

(a.) The analogy of a watch : its marks of design show that it had a maker who foresaw its use.

(b.) The human eye has also marks of design, and must also have had a Designer.

(c.) The evidence cumulative in a triple sense : other marks of design.

(C.) THE EVOLUTION OBJECTION.

(1.) Meaning of Evolution : it is a process, not a cause. (2.) Its effect on the present argument : it can partly explain some organs, though unable to explain others; but even if it could explain them all to the same extent, it would only increase the evidence for design.

(D.) THE FREE WILL OBJECTION.

(1.) Its great improbability, for several reasons; and (2.) as Free Will and Foreknowledge are not incompatible, the only argument in its favour cannot be maintained. Conclusion.

(A.) MEANING OF DESIGN.

Having decided that the material universe had a Creator, we have next to examine whether the Creator designed the universe. Now by *Design* is meant *originating combined with foreknowledge*; so that any voluntary action, combined with foreknowledge of the results that will follow from such action, is to design those results. In the case before us, we have already shown that the Creator did originate the universe. The question, then, that remains to be discussed is whether, when so doing, He foreknew the consequences of His action.

If He did, it is equivalent to His designing those consequences, as the word is here used. And these include, directly or indirectly, the present state of the universe.

By the word *foreknowing* it is not meant that the Creator necessarily thought of all future events, however insignificant, such as the position of the leaves on each tree; but merely that He was able to foresee any of them He wished, and in this sense foreknew them. A human analogy, though of course imperfect, will show the difference intended. Suppose a man constructs a watch and then sets it going; he need not, when doing this, think of and bring before his mind's eye all its consequences, such as the uncoiling of the spring, the revolving of the wheels, and the movement of the hands. But he may be well aware that all these results will follow; and he can, if he likes, think of them. So in the converse case of memory, a man may be able to remember a thousand events in his life; but they are not all before his mind's eye at the same time, and the insignificant ones may never be. In the same way the Creator may have had the capacity of foreseeing all future events in the world's history without actually thinking about them. At all events, this is the kind of foresight, or rather foreknowledge, which is meant to be included in the term *design*.

Now there do not seem to be any antecedent arguments for or against the Creator having designed the universe. But fortunately design can generally be inferred from its effects; and in the present case, when we examine the actual state of the universe, there seems to be overwhelming evidence of its having been designed.

#### (B.) EVIDENCE OF DESIGN.

This evidence is of the most varied kind, especially throughout organic nature, where we find innumerable phenomena, which seem to point to the foresight of the Cause which produced them. And it will be noticed that we are not going to investigate these alleged marks of design as showing the existence of the Creator, as is sometimes done, but merely His foresight. His *existence* has been already established, and also the fact that the universe was originated by Him.

All we are now investigating is whether, when He originated it, He foreknew its future course; and the apparent evidence in favour of this is overwhelming. Everywhere in nature, from the highest forms to the lowest, we meet with apparent marks of design. They are ubiquitous and innumerable. The evidence is indeed so vast that it is difficult to deal with it satisfactorily. Perhaps the best way will be to follow the well-known watch argument of Paley, and first show by the analogy of a watch what it is that constitutes marks of design; next, how a single organ, say the human eye, possesses these marks; and lastly, the cumulative nature of the evidence.

(a.) *The analogy of a watch.*

Now, when we examine a watch, we see that it bears *marks of design*, because the several parts are put together for a purpose. They are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and this motion is so regulated as to point out the hour of the day. Moreover, if they had been differently shaped or differently arranged, either no motion at all would have been produced, or none which would have answered the same purpose. This mechanism being observed, and partly at least understood, two inferences seem to follow at once. The first is that the watch must have had a *maker* somewhere and at some time; and the second is that this maker understood its construction, and *designed* it for the purpose which it actually serves.

These conclusions, it will be noticed, would not be affected by the fact that we had never seen a watch made, never knew a man capable of making one, had no idea how the work could be done, and could not even understand the whole of the mechanism. All this would only exalt our opinion of the unknown watchmaker's skill, but would raise no doubt in our minds either as to his existence or as to his having made the watch for the purpose it serves. In short, we should feel that, however ignorant we might be on many points, we knew quite enough for our purpose—quite enough to convince us that the watch must have been made by some one, and that whoever made it must have known and designed its use. On the other hand, if the watch sometimes went wrong, or seldom

went exactly right, this might lessen our idea of the watchmaker's skill, but, as before, would never lead us to doubt either his existence or his purpose in making the watch.

Nor would we feel the watch accounted for by being told that every part of it worked in strict accordance with natural laws, and could not possibly move otherwise than it did; in fact, that there was no *design* to account for. We should feel that, though the action of every part might be in strict accordance with law, yet the fact that all these parts agreed in this one particular, that they all conduced to enable the watch to tell the time, did evidence design somewhere; in other words, we should feel that the properties of matter only partly accounted for the watch, and that it required an intelligent watchmaker as well, who utilised these properties so as to enable the watch to tell the time.

Now suppose that on further investigation we found the watch also possessed the unexpected property of producing in the course of its movements another watch very like itself, or perhaps a little better. This is at least conceivable. For instance, it might contain a set of lathes, files, and other tools, able automatically to form the new works, or a mould in which they might be cast. What effect would this have on our former conclusions? It would plainly increase our admiration for the watch, and our conviction of the consummate skill of the unknown watchmaker. If without this extra property the watch required a skilful maker, still more would it do so with it.

And this conclusion would not be altered by the fact that very possibly the watch we were examining was itself produced from some previous one, and perhaps that from another. We should feel that, though each watch might be produced from the previous one, it was in no sense designed by it. And hence this would not in the slightest degree weaken our conviction as to the existence of a watchmaker somewhere and at some time who designed the whole series. We should still feel quite sure that there could not be design without a designer, contrivance without a contriver, arrangement without anything capable of arranging, or means carefully

adjusted to produce an end, without that end having been contemplated and the means adapted to it. And we should feel that pushing the difficulty further back, and supposing each watch to have been produced from a previous watch, and so on indefinitely, did not lessen it in the slightest degree. Our going back ever so far brings us no nearer to what we are in search of. Contrivance is still unaccounted for; we still want a contriver. In short, we should feel that a designing mind was neither supplied nor dispensed with on this hypothesis.

This, then, is the watch argument. Wherever we find marks of design, there must be a designer somewhere; and this conclusion cannot be altered by any other considerations whatever. Now it seems to the present writer that the above argument is quite unanswerable. But without assuming this, which would practically settle the question, it will be at once admitted that wherever we find marks of design, there is at least a very strong *prima facie* argument in favour of a designer. If, then, we find in nature any objects resembling a watch in having apparent marks of design, the inference is that they also must have had a designer.

In the present case, however, as before said, we do not require to use the analogy to this extent. And this is a most important point. To complete it, we must assume that the existence of the watchmaker and the fact of his having made the watch are already admitted for other reasons; and that we are only appealing to these marks of design to show that *when* he made the watch (or the first watch of the series), he must have known that it would be able to tell the time (and to produce the other watches), and presumably made it for that purpose. In this case the inference appears, if possible, to be still stronger.

(b.) *The human eye.*

We will now pass on to consider the human eye as an example of natural organs showing marks of design. It is a well-known instance, but none the worse on that account. Now it is necessary, in order to produce distinct vision, that an image or picture of the object should be formed at the

back of the eye, that is, on the retina or expansion of the optic nerve, which communicates the impression to the brain. Whence this necessity arises, or how the picture is connected with the sense of sight, is not known for certain. But this picture being necessary, the eye is an optical instrument for producing it, and in some respects very similar to a telescope. And its *marks of design* are abundant and overwhelming.

To begin with, in both the eye and the telescope the rays of light have to be *refracted*, so as to produce a distinct image. And the humours in the eye which effect this resemble the lenses of a telescope both in their curved shape, their position, and their power over the rays of light. Moreover, the *different* humours through which the rays pass before they reach the retina correct what would otherwise be an imperfection in vision, caused by the rays being partly separated into different colours. The same difficulty had to be overcome in telescopes, and this does not seem to have been effected till it occurred to opticians to imitate in glasses made from different materials the effect of the different humours in the eye.<sup>1</sup>

In the next place, the eye has to be suited to perceive objects at greatly different *distances*, varying from inches to miles. In telescopes this would be done either by putting in another lens, or by some focussing arrangement. How it is effected in the eye is not known for certain, but it plainly is effected, and with marvellous correctness. A landscape of several miles is brought within a space of half an inch in diameter. And yet the multitude of objects it contains, at least the larger ones, are all preserved, and can each be distinguished in its size, shape, colour, and position. And yet the same eye that can do this can read a book at the distance of a few inches.

Again, the eye has to be adapted to different *degrees* of light. This is effected by the iris, which is a kind of screen in the shape of a ring, capable of expanding or contracting so as to alter the size of the central hole or pupil, yet always retaining its circular form. Moreover, it is somehow or other self-adjusting; for if the light is too strong, the pupil at once

<sup>1</sup> Encyc. Brit., art. Telescope, 9th edit., vol. xxiii. p. 137.

contracts. It is needless to point out how desirable such an automatic diaphragm would be in photography, and how greatly we should admire the skill of its inventor.

Again, the eye can, within certain limits, perceive objects in different *directions*; for it is hinged in such a way that, with very little effort, it can be turned with the greatest rapidity right or left, up or down, without moving the head.

Next, the eye is very carefully *protected*. It is not only placed in a strong deep socket, and embedded in a suitable fatty substance, but it is specially defended by the eyelid, which also wipes it and closes it in sleep; while, in order to keep it *moist* and *clean*, both of which are essential, a special fluid is constantly supplied, the superfluous moisture passing through a hole in the bone to the nose, where it is evaporated. Moreover, this valuable instrument is provided *in duplicate*, the pair of eyes being so adjusted that while each can see separately should the other get injured, yet, as a rule, they can both see together with perfect harmony.

It must also be noticed that besides the above conditions, which we can partly understand, the eye has to fulfil many others regarding its *nutrition* and *growth* which are at present unknown. But they must evidently be of great complexity, considering the various and complicated parts of the eye, each of which has to be constantly maintained in a state of efficiency.

Lastly, our admiration for the eye is still further increased when we consider that it was formed *before birth*. It is a striking instance of a *prospective* contrivance, of no use at the time when it was made. It has been compared to an optical instrument made in a dungeon, perfectly constructed for the refraction of light before a ray of light had access to it, and thus adapted to the properties of an element with which it had no communication. It is indeed about to enter into that communication, and this is precisely what shows design. It is providing for the future in the strictest sense; for it is providing not for the then existing state of the child, but for a totally different state into which the child will enter at its birth.

Several more points regarding the eye might be enumerated,



but the above are sufficient to show the general style of the evidence. The eye seems to bear throughout the marks of *artificial construction*, being, in fact, an optical instrument of very great complexity and ingenuity. And the conclusions that the eye must have been made by some one, and that whoever made it must have known and designed its use, seem inevitable.

These conclusions, it will be noticed, like the similar ones in regard to the watch, are not affected by our ignorance on many points. We may have no idea as to how an eye can be made, nor even understand all its parts, and yet feel certain that, as the eye exists, it must have been made by some one, and that its maker designed it for the purpose it serves, and evidently knew far more about its construction than we do. On the other hand, the fact that the eye has a few minor defects, and sometimes gets out of order, may, if not otherwise explained, lessen our idea of the eye-maker's skill, but does not lead us to doubt either his existence or his object in making the eye.

Nor do we feel the eye explained by being told that every part of it has been produced in strict accordance with natural laws, and could not have been otherwise; in fact, that there is no design to account for. No doubt every single part has been thus produced, and if it stood alone there might be little to account for. But it does not stand alone. All the various and complicated parts of the eye agree in this one remarkable point, and in this one only, that they all conduce to enable man to see; and it is this that requires explanation. We feel that there must be some connection between the cause which brought all these parts together and the fact of man's seeing.

As this is an important point, we will quote another analogy to make it quite plain. Suppose we saw a bullet come from behind a parapet, and, after proceeding about half a mile, fall to the ground. We should know that it did this in strict accordance with natural laws, and that it could not go a foot more or less. And the explosive force of the powder, the resistance of the air, and the force of gravity

might fully account for it. But now suppose shot after shot was fired, and every one hit a certain target. We should feel that though the course of every shot was, as before, in exact accordance with law, yet this did not account for the repeated accuracy of fire. Cartridges exploded at random would not behave in this way. And we should feel sure that there must be behind the parapet some intelligent person, who was aiming the rifle with the intention of hitting the target; in short, that the effect evidenced design somewhere. So in the case of the watch and of the eye, there must be design, and therefore a designer, somewhere.

Nor does the fact that organisms of each kind in nature succeed one another by generation alter this conclusion. Indeed, as was shown with reference to the watch, it can only increase our admiration for the consummate skill which must have been expended on the first organism of each kind. Moreover, no part of the design can be attributed to the *parent*. In this respect there is no difference whatever between the watch and an animal. On the hypothesis assumed it is plain that the marks of design in the second watch were not due to the intelligence or designing power of the first watch. It seems equally clear that any marks of design shown by the seeds of plants are not due to the intelligence of the plant which produced them. Similarly, when a bird lays an egg, whatever design there may be in the egg is not due to the bird's intelligence. If it contains what is needful for the production and nourishment of a new bird, it is not due to her forethought. And the same argument applies to all animals and man. Ordinary generation, then, is no objection to the argument we are considering.

We hence conclude that the marks of design in the eye afford, at all events, a very strong *prima facie* argument in favour of a *Designer*. And the more we study the subject the stronger does the argument appear. For the eye was made by One who thoroughly understood the transmission and refraction of light; who knew how to make lenses and to adjust them, or rather make them adjust themselves, to perceive objects at different distances; who knew how to

adapt the eye to different degrees of light, and to make it turn in different directions; who was able to invent various contrivances for protecting the eye, keeping it moist and clean, and enabling it to fulfil all the conditions necessary for growth; and who, moreover, made this wonderful optical instrument before any light had access to it. And if only one eye existed in the universe, and there were no other marks of design in nature, the conclusion that the eye must have been made by an intelligent *Eye-maker* would be none the less clear.

(c.) *The evidence cumulative.*

But the argument is far stronger than this. It is cumulative in a *triple* sense. To begin with, an eye is found not in one man, but in millions of men, each separately showing marks of design, and each separately requiring a designer. Secondly, the human eye is only one example out of hundreds in the human body. The ear or the mouth would prove the conclusion equally well, and so would the lungs or the heart. And these various organs, it should be noticed, do not exist merely as individual organs, but as component parts of the human body, to which, as well as to each other, they are all adapted. And thirdly, human beings are but one out of many thousands of organisms in nature, all bearing equally the marks of design, and showing in some cases an even greater ingenuity than in the human eye.

Of course, as a rule, the lower organisms, being less complicated than the higher ones, have less striking marks of design, but their existence is equally clear. The flowers and other reproductive organs of plants may be mentioned as well-known instances from the vegetable kingdom. And even where we cannot understand the design, we can infer its existence. An acorn, for instance, must be of a very ingenious structure to enable it to develop into an oak-tree. It should also be noticed that there are several other classes of phenomena which show design to some extent, such as the instincts of certain animals, the adaptation of animals to their surroundings, and the mutual relation between plants and animals; the latter living upon organic matter, which they cannot produce for them-

selves from minerals, air, and water, but which they find ready for use in plants.

Nor is this all, for even in *inorganic* nature we find traces of design. For instance, everything on this planet is adapted for the support of life. Had the size of the earth, the state of the atmosphere, the variations in temperature, or the supply of food been very different from what they are, no life as we now know it could have existed. Of course, it may be said that other and suitable forms would then have been evolved ; but this is mere conjecture. The inference is plain that, if a variety of circumstances are so adapted as to enable us to live on this earth, the Cause which adapted them intended us so to live. And to take a still more general view, it may even be said that the orderly working of the universe seems of itself to show design. Had the world been a chaos, it might have been thought possible that the Originating Power was unaware of what would be the result of his action. But a universe such as we now see can scarcely have been originated without foreknowledge. But as all these marks of design are admittedly far less conclusive than those shown by organic nature, we need not examine them in detail.

But a single example may be given to show the kind of evidence. As is well known, cold usually contracts bodies ; but there is a remarkable exception. Water between the temperatures of  $4^{\circ}$  and  $0^{\circ}$  Cent. *expands* when cooled, though at other times it contracts as usual. The cause of this strange anomaly is unknown, but its utility is obvious. For were it otherwise, the colder water would always sink to the bottom, and shallow ponds would be frozen through in winter, and their fish would be destroyed. As it is, when water gets near the freezing-point, an almost universal law is reversed ; the colder water expands, becomes the lighter, and therefore stays at the top and freezes over, and the fish are preserved. Of course, it may be said that the Cause which brought about this strange anomaly was unaware that it would have this beneficent result ; but the inference is certainly the other way.

We hence conclude, on reviewing the whole subject, that various phenomena in nature, more especially organs like the

eye, bear strong marks of having been *designed*; and the further conclusion that the Designer should be the same as the Creator of the universe, who originated the whole of nature, is too plain to need insisting on. Now there are two, and only two, important objections to this argument, which may be conveniently called the *Evolution* and the *Free Will* objection.

(C.) THE EVOLUTION OBJECTION.

The first objection is that everything in nature has been brought about in accordance with fixed laws by the process of Evolution; and therefore, though it is possible the Creator may have foreseen all present phenomena, yet the apparent marks of design in nature, being all the necessary and inevitable results of those laws, do not afford any evidence that He actually did so. In discussing this objection, we will first consider the meaning of Evolution, and then its effect on the present argument.

(1.) *The meaning of Evolution.*—Now by the term Evolution is meant to be included the processes of Organic Evolution, Natural Selection, and Survival of the Fittest. The former may be described as meaning that all the varied forms of life now existing, or that ever have existed on this earth, are the descendants of earlier and less developed forms, and those again of yet simpler ones. So that if we could trace back the chain, or rather network, of organic existence, we should find the first parents of all living beings in certain nodules of what may be popularly called animated jelly. And the theories of *Natural Selection* and *Survival of the Fittest* explain how this may have taken place. For among the various slight modifications that would most likely occur in every organism, those, and those only, would be perpetuated which were of advantage to it in the struggle for existence. And these would in time, it is assumed, become hereditary in its descendants, and thus higher forms of life would be gradually produced. And the value of these theories is that they show how Organic Evolution may have taken place without involving any sudden change, such as a monkey giving birth to a man.

Now, although Evolution is to some extent generally

admitted by scientific men, yet considerable doubt exists as to whether some *breaks* may not have occurred, such as at the origin of vegetable, animal, and human life. In dealing with this objection, however, it is thought better to give it the utmost possible strength. We will therefore assume that there were no breaks at all, and that all forms of life, including man himself, have been developed out of the earliest form by natural generation; each successive modification having been very slight, and then such as were of advantage to the organism being perpetuated by Natural Selection.

It will, of course, be noticed that Evolution is thus a *process*, and not a *cause*. It is the method in which certain phenomena have been brought about, and method is not causation. Every slight modification must have been caused somehow, for a material change without a cause seems incredible. When such modifications were caused, then Natural Selection can explain how the useful ones alone were perpetuated, but it cannot explain how the modifications themselves arose. On the contrary, it necessarily supposes them as already existing, otherwise there would be nothing to select from. Natural Selection, then, 'rather weeds than plants.' Among the various modifications in an organism, some good and some bad, it merely shows how, as a rule, the useless ones would disappear, and the useful ones alone would be perpetuated; in other words, how the fittest would survive. But this survival of the fittest does not explain in the slightest degree how the fitness arose. If, as an extreme example, out of a hundred animals, fifty had eyes and fifty had none, it is easy to understand how those that had eyes would be more likely to perpetuate their species; but this does not explain how they first got eyes. And the same applies in other cases.

How, then, did the variations in each organism first arise? In common language they may be ascribed to chance, but, strictly speaking, such a thing is impossible. The word *chance* is merely a convenient term for the results of certain forces of nature when we are unable to calculate them. Chance, then, must be excluded; and there seem to be only two

alternatives to choose from. Either the organisms in nature possessed free will, and acted as they did *voluntarily*, or else they did not possess free will, and acted as they did *necessarily*. The former hypothesis will be examined later on; the latter is the one we are now considering. And it is plainly equivalent to all the organisms in nature being mere machines, the action of which was fixed when matter was first formed into nodules of animated jelly. Since then, everything has been brought about by the ordinary processes of nature, or, assuming these as fixed, everything has been automatic and the necessary consequence of what went before.

(2.) *The effect of Evolution.*—Would, then, such a complete process of evolution tend to invalidate our previous conclusion that the Creator designed all the organs in nature, such as the eye, and hence presumably the whole of the universe? On the contrary, it corroborates it; for Evolution requires a being to *design* it, just as plainly as it requires a being to *originate* it. All that evolution does is to push the evidence for design further back, and hence to increase our admiration for the Designer. This will no doubt appear obvious to many readers, but from the importance of the subject we will examine it in detail. And we will consider first the marks of design which Evolution can to a certain extent explain, then those which it seems unable to explain, and lastly what would be the effect if it could explain them all to the same extent.

As an example of the former we may take the *human hand*. Now, if this has been developed out of the extremity of a monkey ancestor, merely through its trying to use the extremity as a hand (*e.g.*, by taking hold of things), then its existence as a piece of mechanism may be due to the ordinary laws of nature, and it does not seem to require any special designing.

But some of the most striking marks of design cannot be thus explained; as, for instance, the *human eye*. It is quite clear that wishing to see or trying to see, even if blind animals were capable of either, would never give them eyes. But it may be said that some of the earlier and less developed organisms had only *rudimentary* eyes, which could not see, but which in their structure and position resembled seeing eyes, and

which became such in their later descendants. And does not this show that the eye could not have been designed by the Creator, or He would have given animals perfect eyes at once?

On the contrary, the inference is in favour of design. For there is nothing improbable in the Creator producing eyes, like the rest of nature, in accordance with some fixed plan, and by this slow process of Evolution. But without this hypothesis of an Intelligent Creator the rudimentary eye is quite inexplicable. It was of no possible use to its owner in the struggle for existence, and therefore could never have been evolved at all by mere natural selection. For natural selection can only perpetuate and improve an organ which is not only useful but actually used, and the rudimentary eye could have been neither. Moreover, during all the time it was being elaborated it was not only useless but detrimental to its possessor, since it required nourishment which would otherwise have gone to useful organs. It was thus a *prospective* contrivance, slowly built up and perfected during many generations, without being of any use till nearly finished. And this seems to show design as plainly as anything can. It seems clear, then, that uncontrolled Evolution—that is to say, Evolution merely by accidental variations, as they are called—and Survival of the Fittest, cannot account for the eye at all. In fact, it requires not natural selection but *supernatural selection* to explain it satisfactorily.

But now suppose, for the sake of argument, that this were otherwise, and that the eye and all other organs had been produced by natural processes in the same way that a hand may have been evolved from a foot. Does this destroy the evidence for design? Certainly not, it only increases it. For referring to the previous example, although on this hypothesis the amount of design required in the production of a hand may be lessened, or even got rid of altogether, it increases the amount of design which had to be expended on the previous foot to an almost endless extent. For to manufacture an extremity which, though originally a foot, should in the course of generations become a hand, as the animal kept trying to



use it as such, would require far more design than to manufacture a hand straight off, as we should say. Similarly, to take a more general case, to manufacture an extremity which, in a being that wished to fly, and kept trying to fly, should in time develop automatically into a wing, and in one that wished to walk into a foot, and in one that wished to swim into a fin, and yet all under the same laws of nature and from the same starting-point, would require an ingenuity, a skill, a foresight, an intelligence—in fact, an amount of design which is practically infinite.

Nor does Evolution explain even what at first sight it seems most capable of doing—the *adaptation* shown by an organism to its surroundings. For instance, to take a simple example, arctic animals, which live among ice and snow, have adapted themselves for this by having a white skin instead of a dark one, which enables them both to capture their prey with less chance of detection, and also to run less chance of being caught themselves. And it may be said Evolution fully explains this, for the colour of the skin is never absolutely constant, and as the animal with the lightest skin would always have most chance of living to maturity and perpetuating its species, heredity would account for the skin in time becoming quite white.

All this may be granted, but what then? It only increases the evidence for design. For the adaptation of these animals to their requirements necessarily supposes a previous *adaptability* on their part; in other words, they must have possessed the power of thus modifying themselves. And they must therefore have been formed originally on the principle of what are called *self-adjusting machines*, which, without further interference, can adapt themselves to variable circumstances. And this is the method which, of all others, requires most ingenuity; at all events, we consider it so in human workmanship. Take, for instance, a compensated pendulum. As is well known, an ordinary clock will gain time in hot weather through the expansion of the pendulum rod; but in a compensated pendulum, instead of one rod, there are several bars of steel and zinc, so arranged that the

expansion upwards of the one balances the expansion downwards of the other, and the centre of gravity remains unchanged, and the clock always keeps good time. And it is obvious that a pendulum which can thus adjust itself to variable temperatures displays far more ingenuity than one which has to be altered externally. And if a clock could be compensated for differences in latitude also, it would show still greater ingenuity. And in the same way, if all the organisms in nature have been made on the principle of self-adjusting machines, which are able to adapt themselves to variable circumstances, it increases the amount of design which must have been spent on them originally to an extent which is practically infinite.

Thus, Evolution, however we regard it, necessarily implies a previous *Involution*; for all forms of life must have been involved potentially in the first form of life before they could be evolved from it; so that creation by evolution is far more wonderful than creation by direct manufacture. And it seems to many to be a far nobler conception of the Creator that He should obtain all the results He desired by one grand system of evolution, rather than create each species separately. Evolution, then, does not destroy Theism, but only the difficulties of Theism, by showing that every single part of every single organism may have been *designed*, and yet in a manner worthy of an Infinite Being.

Nor is this argument affected even if we carry back the process of evolution so as to include the vital from the non-vital, *i.e.*, if we assume that the first nodules of animated jelly were themselves evolved by some natural, though to us unknown, process from previous forms of inanimate matter; and these again from simpler forms, and so on indefinitely, till we get back to the original state of matter, whatever that may have been. For if the results as we now see them show design, then the deduction from this as to the existence, and still more, if this is admitted, as to the *foreknowledge*, of a Designer, is not weakened, but our ideas of His skill are greatly increased, 'if we believe that these results were already secured when our earth was only

a nebula; so that this extended view of *cosmic evolution*, as it is called, would only still further increase the evidence for design.

(D.) THE FREE WILL OBJECTION.

We have, lastly, to consider the more important objection, that arising from *Free Will*. Why, it is urged, may not all organic beings have possessed free will within certain limits, and have voluntarily selected those forms which suited them best? For example, referring to the analogy of a watch, if telling the time were of any advantage to the watch itself, and if the spring, wheels, and hands possessed free will, then it might be thought that they had formed themselves into that arrangement which suited them best; and if so, the hypothesis that the watchmaker foresaw and intended them to adopt this arrangement seems unnecessary.

Now, in the case before us, as the organs showing design in nature, such as the eye, do nearly always conduce to the welfare of their possessor, the objection is on *prima facie* grounds credible, but, as we shall see, it is most improbable; while the only argument in its favour, that free will and foreknowledge are incompatible, cannot be maintained. It need scarcely be pointed out that we are not assuming that the organisms have free will, but merely admitting that they may have it. And if any one denies this, the objection, as far as he is concerned, falls to the ground at once.

(1.) *Its great improbability.*—This is apparent for three reasons. In the first place, low down in the scale of nature, the free will of the organisms, if they have any, must be very limited. It is difficult, for instance, to imagine that plants and trees have a free will at all resembling that of man; and yet they bear unmistakable marks of design. Secondly, in higher organisms, which may perhaps have a free will capable of working towards a definite end, it is difficult to see why they should have developed organs, like the rudimentary eye, which were not for their own advantage but for that of their remote descendants. And how, we may ask, did blind animals know anything about the value of sight or the proper means of obtaining it? While, thirdly, even

in those cases where free will seems strongest, as in man himself, there is no evidence that it can effect anything like what is required. Suppose, for instance, men wanted to have three eyes instead of two, can any one suggest how they would set about obtaining the third? And yet, if they have voluntarily given themselves two, they should be able with sufficient time to give themselves three.

For all these reasons, then, it is most improbable that the marks of design in nature were due to the organisms themselves rather than to their Creator. But there is one important argument on the other side, which, if it could be maintained, would be sufficient to outweigh all this improbability. It is, that some beings, such as man, do, as a matter of fact, possess a free will, and that man can and does alter his condition, to a slight extent, by using that free will. And therefore it is said it is impossible for the Creator to have known what man's condition would be, because free will and foreknowledge are *necessarily* incompatible. But this latter point is disputed.

(2.) *Free Will and Foreknowledge not incompatible.*—Now, although at first sight freedom of action seems inconsistent with any foreknowledge of what that action will be, yet on closer examination this will be found to be at least doubtful. For our own experience seems to show that in some cases, at all events, it is not in the nature of things impossible to foreknow how a free being will act.

For example, I myself may know how, under given external conditions, I will act to-morrow. Never being sure of these, I cannot be said to actually foreknow the event; so that foreknowing with man is never more than foreguessing. But I may be quite sure how, *under given conditions*, I will act. For instance, I may know that, provided I keep in good health, provided I receive no news from any one, provided, &c., I will go to my office some time to-morrow morning. And yet I feel equally sure that this foreknowledge of mine does not prevent the act when it comes from being quite free on my part. My knowing this evening what I shall do to-morrow does not oblige me to do it. I merely know *what use I shall*

*make of my freedom.* And these are probably the common feelings of mankind on the subject. Of course, each reader must decide this question for himself.

It may still be urged, that though this is undoubtedly what we feel, *i.e.*, it is what our consciousness tells us, yet consciousness is not a sure guide in the matter. But the answer is obvious. The whole of this objection is based on an appeal to consciousness. It is consciousness alone which tells us that we have a will ; it is consciousness alone or chiefly which tells us that somehow or other this will is free. Is it then unfair to answer that consciousness also tells us that, somehow or other, this free will of ours is not inconsistent with our foreknowing how we shall act in certain assumed cases ?

It seems, then, that my foreknowledge need not be inconsistent with my free will. And hence, if I tell somebody else how I shall act, his foreknowledge would not be inconsistent with my free will. So that in some cases, and with assumed external conditions, it does not seem impossible for a man to foreknow how another man will act, and yet without interfering with his freedom. In short, free will does not seem to be necessarily incompatible with the foreknowledge even of man, though it is always practically so, owing to man's imperfect knowledge of the surrounding circumstances. But the Creator knows, or may know, these circumstances fully, and therefore it must be still less incompatible with *His* foreknowledge.

And this is strongly confirmed when we reflect that the difficulty of knowing how a free being will act, however great in itself, seems as nothing compared with the difficulty of *creating* a free being. Apart from experience, we should all pronounce this to be really impossible. And yet man himself has been created somehow. Is it then unlikely that the Being who was able to surmount the greater difficulty, and to create a free man, should also be able to surmount the lesser difficulty, and to foreknow how he would act ? We are not, of course, arguing from this that He actually does foreknow it, only that it is not in the nature of things impossible that He should do so. In other words, free will and foreknowledge are not *necessarily* incompatible.

And this is precisely what we had to show. The marks of design in nature afford what seems to be overwhelming evidence in favour of the foreknowledge of the Creator. The objection we are considering is that, in spite of all this evidence, we must still deny it, because the organisms in nature, including man, have, or may have, free will; and if so, any foreknowledge is in the nature of things impossible. And the instant it is shown that such foreknowledge is not impossible, the objection falls to the ground.

We may now sum up the argument in this chapter. We first explained *Design* as meaning originating combined with foreknowledge. We next considered the evidence for design, especially from organic nature, choosing a single example, the human eye, on which to focus the argument. And this evidence appeared to be complete and overwhelming, more especially as we were not appealing to it to show the existence of a Creator, which is already admitted, but merely His foreknowledge. And we have since considered the two apparent objections to this argument arising from Evolution and Free Will. But when carefully examined, the former only strengthens the argument, while the latter does not invalidate it. We therefore conclude, on reviewing the whole subject, that the Creator *designed the universe*.

## CHAPTER IV

### THAT THEREFORE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD IS EXTREMELY PROBABLE

(A.) MEANING OF THE TERM GOD.

The Personal Being who designed and originated the universe: two of His attributes, Omniscience and Omnipotence.

(B.) THE OBJECTION THAT GOD IS UNKNOWABLE.

This is partly true; but everything is unknowable in its real nature, though in each case the partial knowledge we can obtain is precisely what we require.

(C.) RECAPITULATION OF ARGUMENT.

(A.) MEANING OF THE TERM GOD.

We decided in the last chapter that the Creator designed the universe; in other words, that when He originated it He foreknew its whole history. Now any being who is able to design we will call a *personal being*. And GOD is the name given to the Personal Being who designed and originated the universe. Hence the proposition at the head of this chapter follows at once.

Before, however, leaving the subject of *personality*, it should be noticed that the term when applied to man is commonly used in a much wider sense than is here given to it, and includes various attributes, such as self-consciousness, besides the power of designing. We will examine in the next chapter whether man is a personal being as we have defined the term; but two remarks may be made here.

The first is, that if we admit the personality of *man*, we have another and independent argument in favour of that of the Creator. For man, with all his attributes, has been somehow or other produced by the Creator. And therefore He cannot

be a mere impersonal Being or Force, for such a Being could have formed no conception of personality, much less have produced such a result in ourselves. And this argument is plainly unaffected by the method in which man's personality has been brought about, whether directly or indirectly, suddenly or slowly, by evolution or by any other process. If the result shows personality, there must have been personality in the First Cause, for a cause must be adequate to explain its results. In short, the personality of man's *Maker* necessarily follows from that of man.

The other remark is that the idea of man's personality introduces a great difficulty; indeed many consider it the greatest difficulty in regard to Theism: we mean that of believing that the Creator is a Personal Being in any similar sense. For a human person means an individual, and individuality or separate existence implies the existence of something else external to the person from which it separates itself. Self-consciousness can thus only be arrived at from being conscious of something else which is not self; or, in philosophical language, the *ego* implies the *non-ego*. On the other hand, the Creator or First Cause of the universe seems to be Infinite and Boundless. We think of Him as Eternal, Omnipresent, and All-embracing.

There is an undoubted difficulty here, but it is probably due to our ignorance. Personality in the case of man may imply limitations, but Personality in the case of the Creator need not. In the same way, *seeing* with man implies an organ of sight; but *seeing* with the Creator, or rather His unknown attribute, which is least inadequately represented to the human mind by that term, certainly does not. In short, a human idea when transferred to the Deity is necessarily incomplete and imperfect. And it may be added, that many who hesitate to ascribe Personality to the First Cause do it for this very reason, that the term is inadequate rather than incorrect. The choice, they say, is not between personality and something lower than personality, but between personality and something higher; and the ultimate power is no more representable in terms of human consciousness than human consciousness is



representable in terms of plant functions. Under these circumstances, we have thought it better to limit the meaning of personality to the idea of designing. And in this sense the evidence that the Creator of the universe is a Personal Being is, as we have seen, overwhelming; and it must therefore be admitted, whatever difficulties we may find in reconciling it with what we think to be other truths regarding Him.

We must next notice somewhat carefully two of His attributes, *Wisdom* and *Power*. Both of these are necessarily implied in the idea of a Personal Being able to design. For *design*, as used in this essay, includes originating or freely accomplishing anything, as well as previously planning it. And therefore, if we use the word, as is often done, for planning alone, we must remember that a personal being is one who can both design and accomplish. The former implies a mind able to form some plan, and the latter a free will able to carry it out; or, to put the argument in other words, all organs showing marks of design, such as the eye, not only require a cause, but indicate a purpose. The former explains how they were brought about, the latter why they were brought about; the former requires a force to produce them, the latter a mind to design them; and therefore a personal being must of necessity have wisdom to design and power to accomplish. And considering the vastness of the universe and the complexity of its organisms, it seems only reasonable to conclude that the Creator possesses both of these attributes to the greatest possible extent, so that He is Omniscient and Omnipotent.

But it is important to notice the meaning given to these words. *Omniscience*, then, means possessing all possible knowledge. Now the only knowledge which might be thought impossible is how a free being would act in the future, and we have already shown that such knowledge is not in the nature of things impossible; so there does not seem to be any necessary restriction here.

But with *Omnipotence* the case is different. This means, as said above, possessing all possible power; that is to say,

being able to do anything which does not violate necessary truth, since this is by hypothesis impossible. Omnipotence, then, as here defined, does not mean that *with God all things are possible*,<sup>1</sup> but that God is able to do all possible things. Of course, some Christians may be inclined to dispute this, relying on the above text; but as He who said so prefaced one of His own prayers with the words *if it be possible*, the former statement cannot be taken in its widest sense. And provided the word impossible is strictly limited to its meaning in Chap. i., we have no reason for thinking that God could do impossible things; such as make a triangle with the properties of a circle, or allow a man a free choice between two alternatives, and yet oblige him to choose one of them. These, then, are two of the great attributes of God, Wisdom and Power. There is a third, which will be considered in Chap. vi.

It should be noticed, in conclusion, that besides being the Designer and Originator of the universe, God seems to be also in a certain sense its *Maintainer* at the present day, being, in fact, the Omnipresent Power which is still working throughout nature. That there is such a Power can scarcely be denied, and that it is the same as the Originating Power is plainly the most probable hypothesis. God is thus the Cause of all natural forces now, just as He was their Originator in times past; and what are called *secondary* or natural causes, though the term is a useful one, have probably no existence. This is often spoken of as the Divine Immanence in nature, and means little else than the Omnipresence of a Personal God.

(B.) THE OBJECTION THAT GOD IS UNKNOWABLE.

We must lastly consider an important objection which may be made to the whole argument in this book. It may be said that the human mind is unable to argue about the *First Cause*, because we have no faculties for comprehending the Infinite; or, as it is commonly expressed, because God is *Unknowable*.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 19. 26.

Now this objection is partly true. There is a sense in which all will admit that God is Unknowable. His existence and attributes are too great for any human mind to comprehend entirely, or for any human language to express completely and accurately. And therefore all our statements on the subject are at best only approximations to the truth. We can apprehend God's existence, but we cannot comprehend it, and God alone knows fully what the term means. This has been recognised by thoughtful men in all ages, who have agreed with Job that a *perfect* knowledge of God is unattainable.<sup>1</sup>

But more than this, not only is the nature of the Infinite God inconceivable to our finite minds, but it is necessarily so. The infinite is always beyond our comprehension. Thus in an exact science like mathematics, provided the infinite is concerned, certain propositions which we know to be true are quite inconceivable. For example, an arc of a circle with an infinite radius becomes a straight line. And yet to us they seem quite distinct, for a straight line is always the shortest distance between its extreme points, and the arc of a circle is never so. Or, again, how can we realise the statement that something divided by nothing equals infinity?

Such examples as these, which are only beyond our understanding, are of course totally different from anything which is within our understanding, and which we can show to be false. This is usually expressed by the terms *above reason* and *contrary to reason*; the former meaning a disproportion between the subject and our faculties for understanding it, and the latter a recognised contradiction of truth. And the difference may be illustrated from this very subject of Theism. It is in some sense above reason to believe in an uncaused Cause of all things; but it is contrary to reason to believe in no Cause at all. A somewhat similar distinction, it may be noticed, exists in regard to our other faculties. For example, if it is asserted that a clock has just struck ten, this would be contrary to our sense of hearing if we had heard it strike eleven, but merely

<sup>1</sup> Job 11. 7.

beyond our sense of hearing if we had been too far off to hear it at all. Now it is the same with the intellectual faculty, and therefore we should expect the Infinite God to be beyond our comprehension. In short, God in His true Nature is *Unknowable*.

But, strictly speaking, the same is the case with all knowledge. Man in his true nature is also unknowable, but yet we know something about him. So, again, the forces of nature are all unseen and unknowable in themselves, but yet from their manifestations we know something about them. And even matter when reduced to molecules and atoms is still a mystery, and yet we know a good deal about matter. And in each case this knowledge is not unreal because it is incomplete. Why, then, should the fact of God being in His true Nature unknowable prevent our having some real, though partial, knowledge of Him, and arranging that knowledge in scientific order? In short, we may know something about God, though we cannot know everything about Him.

And it should be noticed that Natural Theology and Natural Science are alike in this respect—they are both founded on inferences drawn from the observed phenomena of nature. For example, we observe the motion of falling bodies, and infer the existence of some force, gravity, to account for this. Similarly, we observe the marks of design throughout nature, and infer the existence, or at least foresight, of a Being who designed them. In neither case have we any direct knowledge about the cause of the phenomena. And in some respects Theology is not so unknowable as Science. For our own, real or apparent, mind and free will do give us some kind of idea of the existence of a personal being apart from what he does; whereas of a natural force, such as gravity, apart from its effects we can form no conception whatever. Thus our knowledge of every subject is but partial, and it finally leads us into the Unknowable.

But now comes the important point. This partial knowledge, which is all we can obtain in either Science or Theology, is all we require. It is not a perfect knowledge, but it is sufficient for all practical purposes. Whatever the force of

gravity may be in itself, we know what it is *to us*. We know that if we jump off a cliff we shall fall to the ground, and this is the practical knowledge which we require. And so in regard to Theology. Whatever God may be in Himself, we know what He is *to us*. We know that He is our Maker, and therefore, as will be shown in the next chapter, the Being to whom we are responsible. This is the practical knowledge which we require, and this is the knowledge which is attainable.

Moreover, though human reason may be to some extent unfit to judge of such subjects, we have nothing else to judge by. In controversy with other men, the appeal must always lie to human reason and nothing else. And the vast importance of the subject seems to demand our coming to some conclusion one way or the other. This is especially the case because important results affecting a man's daily life follow from deciding the question of God's existence in the affirmative, and to leave it undecided is practically to decide it in the negative. In the same way, if a ship were in danger of sinking, and a steamer also in distress offered to take off the passengers; for one of them to say that he had not sufficient data to determine whether it was safer to go in the steamer, and would therefore do nothing and stay where he was, would be practically the same as deciding not to go in the steamer. So in the case before us. To refuse to decide the question owing to the alleged inadequacy of human reason, is practically the same as to deny the existence of God.

Still, it may be urged, granting that human reason must decide the question one way or the other, and granting that human reason seems to force us to conclude in the existence of God, are there not great difficulties in honestly believing this conclusion? No doubt there are, and no thoughtful man would think of ignoring them. But after all it is only a choice of difficulties. If reason is to decide the question, our beliefs must move in the *line of least resistance*. And, as we have shown in the previous chapters, there is less difficulty in believing each of the propositions here maintained than the contrary. It is less difficult, for instance, to believe that the

universe had an origin than to believe that it had not; and so with the other propositions. And it is precisely this that constitutes what we have called a *proof*. We have not attempted to demonstrate the existence of God, or to show that this hypothesis is free from difficulties; but we have shown that, with all its difficulties, it is still by far the most probable hypothesis to explain the origin and present state of the universe. We therefore decide that the existence of God is *extremely probable*.

(C.) RECAPITULATION OF ARGUMENT.

In conclusion, we will very briefly repeat the main line of argument in this book. To begin with, in the present universe we observe a succession of changes. If these changes are neither infinite in number nor recurring, both of which seem incredible, they must have had a commencement. This commencement must have been voluntarily produced, and therefore the present universe must be due to a *Free Force* somewhere. Or, again, the universe is a phenomenon in time and space, and therefore it cannot be a necessary phenomenon; for what exists necessarily must exist always and everywhere, and without relation to time or space. Therefore, as above, it is a voluntarily produced phenomenon, and must be due to a *Free Force* somewhere.

Having decided this, the next step is that this *Free Force* must be supernatural, since natural forces are not free, but always act according to some fixed law. And the unity of nature points to its being a Single Supernatural Force. Next, it follows that this Force must have foreknown the consequences of its own action, judging by the marks of design which they present. And this conclusion is shown to be not incompatible with either the process of evolution or the existence of free will in man and other beings. And hence the Originating Force must have been a *Personal Being*, possessing both Wisdom to design and Power to accomplish.

Or the whole argument may be repeated in an even shorter form. The universe as an *effect* must have had an adequate *Cause*. Since the effect shows a certain unity throughout, the Cause must have been One. Since the effect shows in

some parts evidence of having been planned and arranged, the capacity for planning and arranging must have existed in the Cause. In other words, a universe showing marks of design is the effect, and nothing less than a Personal Being who designed it can be the Cause. And GOD is the name given to this Personal Being.

## BOOK II

### A MIRACULOUS REVELATION

#### CHAPTER V

##### THAT MAN IS A FREE AND RESPONSIBLE BEING

(A.) **MAN'S MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS.**

Man possesses a mind as well as a body : two objections—

(a.) Materialism, or there is no such thing as mind.

(b.) Idealism, or there is no such thing as matter.

Both consistent theories, but they have enormous difficulties.

(B.) **MAN'S MORAL CHARACTERISTICS.**

(1.) Man possesses a will, which is distinct from his mind and body.

(2.) And his acts are partly determined by his will.

(3.) This will is a *free* will.

(4.) Moreover, man knows that his will is free ; and this enables him to design, and makes him a personal being.

(5.) And therefore man is *responsible* for his acts, that is, for how he uses his freedom.

(6.) Man also possesses a moral sense ; and this enables him to distinguish the quality of acts as right and wrong, and makes him a moral being.

(7.) While, lastly, man has a conscience, or direct means of judging of this quality in some cases.

(C.) **DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANIMALS AND MEN.**

There is great mental difference, though probably only of degree ; and entire moral difference, since animals do not seem to possess a *known* freedom, and are hence not personal beings.

(D.) **CONCLUSION.**

Man's nature probably tripartite ; his unique position.

THE position in the argument at which we have now arrived is this. In the previous chapters we decided on the existence of God, meaning by that term the Personal Being who de-



signed and originated the universe. We have now to examine the credibility or otherwise of His making a revelation to man. And before discussing this, we must consider, first, the *character of man*—is he a being in any sense worthy of a revelation? and secondly, the *Character of God*—is He a Being at all likely to make a revelation? The former question alone will be dealt with in this chapter, and we will consider man's bodily, mental, and moral characteristics separately, using the word *man* for the complete whole. And it may be pointed out at starting, that as all science is based on observed facts, the science of Human Nature must be based on the observed facts of human nature, and not on any *a priori* reasoning as to what we think probable or the reverse. Moreover, in discussing human nature or anything else, we must of course argue from a perfect, and not from an imperfect specimen. Savages and children are only imperfect specimens of humanity, and cannot be taken to represent the species; more especially since, however degraded or uneducated they may be, they all seem capable of becoming civilised and reasonable beings. Human nature in its more perfect form is already theirs; it only wants developing. And it may be added we are only investigating what a man actually is at the present time, irrespective of how he came to be so. This latter is an interesting question, but it is beside our present inquiry. Nothing need be said about man's *bodily* or physical characteristics, as they have no bearing on our present argument.

(A.) MAN'S MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS.

By these are meant man's thoughts and feelings. Now, that mental phenomena are different from bodily phenomena seems self-evident. Matter has extension, weight, colour, shape, and hardness. Mind has the absence of all these. They have no conceivable meaning when applied to thoughts and feelings. And yet both mental and bodily phenomena exist in man. The most obvious explanation, then, is to refer them to a different cause, and to assume that man has a *mind* as well as a body. This is the answer given by human consciousness. We each feel conscious that we have some-

thing which *thinks*, and which we call mind ; as well as something which moves, and which we call matter, *i.e.*, our bodies. And from the nature of the case human consciousness is all we can appeal to. For mind, if it exists at all, being by hypothesis different from matter, must be immaterial, and cannot therefore be discovered in the laboratory or by any scientific process.

And it must be remembered we possess no higher certitudes than these *inherent convictions*, which form the basis of all our knowledge. Even the propositions of Euclid are only deductions from some other of our inherent convictions, such as that the whole is greater than its part. To endeavour, then, to destroy one of these convictions, such as the difference between mind and matter, by abstract and metaphysical reasoning can never be successful ; for such reasoning, even at its best, must ultimately rest on similar convictions. The difficulty, however, of understanding this dualism in man, part mind and part body, has led many to adopt one or other of two opposite theories—either Materialism or Idealism.

(a.) *Materialism.*

According to this theory, there is no such thing as mind. What we call mental phenomena are merely very complex motions of the molecules of the brain, and hence do not differ in kind from bodily phenomena. Now, that the mind and brain are closely associated together none will deny, but it does not follow that they are identical. The brain may be merely the instrument of the mind through which it acts. And though, as far as we know, the mind can never act without the brain, it may certainly have a separate existence, and possibly, under different conditions, may be able to act separately. All we can say is, that within the range of our experience the two seem to be somehow (though we cannot say how) connected together.

On the other hand, there are enormous difficulties in accepting Materialism. For mental phenomena must be either the peculiar property of such highly organised forms of matter as our brains, or else the common property of all matter. On the former hypothesis, the proposed explanation is no explana-

tion at all. If, it has been said, water does not think or feel when it freezes, nor oxygen when it burns, nor nitrogen when it combines with other elements, why should these and similar substances when united in a man have thoughts and feelings as well? To assert that this is so is no explanation, but merely a re-statement of the observed facts in more ambiguous language.

On the latter hypothesis, mental phenomena of some kind must exist in all matter, only in a very diluted form; and when matter assumes the complex form of certain organised beings, the corresponding *mind-stuff*, as it has been called, assumes the complex form of thoughts and feelings. But this is extremely hard to realise. We cannot imagine how our thoughts, so various and so constantly changing, can exist in a diluted form in the food which we eat and the air which we breathe. Of course, this does not necessarily prevent its being true; only, if true, we are not able to understand it. But the chief object in adopting Materialism was to get a theory which we could understand, and this it does not afford. All that can be said for it is that it avoids the difficulty of dualism in man.

(b.) *Idealism.*

And precisely the same may be said for the opposite theory of Idealism. According to this, man has ideas or mental phenomena alone, and there is no such thing as matter. And though at first sight it might be doubted, everything can be accounted for on this theory. For instance, I cannot be sure of the existence of the table at which I am writing. I may see it, but that merely means that I have a certain impression in my brain; I may touch it, but that merely means that I have another impression in my brain; and I cannot be sure that there is any object corresponding to these impressions. This may be otherwise expressed by saying that the whole of our life is like a dream; and it is a perfectly consistent theory so to regard it, while the actual phenomena of dreams are of course quoted in its favour.

The case, then, stands thus. While we have the universal consciousness of mankind in favour of dualism—that is to say,

of his having a mind distinct from his body—it is possible theoretically to explain human phenomena as either all material or all mental. But neither of these theories can claim to be the only consistent one, and they are mutually antagonistic. Indeed, the relation of mind to matter is like a knot which our reason cannot completely untie. But it seems better to recognise both the knot and our inability to untie it, rather than adopt the theories of Materialism or of Idealism, neither of which attempts to untie the knot, but merely cuts it on one side or the other. And it is certainly more scientific to argue from experience and observation that man actually has this dual nature, rather than to argue *à priori* that he cannot have it, because we cannot explain how mind and matter can be united in a man. We must therefore abide by our inherent conviction that we have a mind as well as a body. This is an ultimate fact in human nature; and, like some other ultimate facts, has to be assumed, because it can be neither proved nor doubted.

(B.) MAN'S MORAL CHARACTERISTICS.

But we are still very far from having exhausted the mysteries of human nature. Man has also moral characteristics, which may be thus analysed.

(1.) *Man possesses a Will.*

In the first place, man possesses a will. The chief, if not the only, reason for believing this is, of course, human consciousness. Man feels that he does possess a will which is distinct from his body and mind, though closely associated with both, and apparently to some extent controlling both. For example, I may resolve to raise my hand, and thereupon do it; in which case the will is connected with bodily phenomena. Or I may resolve to think out a proposition in Euclid, and thereupon do it; in which case the will is connected with mental phenomena. We are not arguing at present that the will is the cause of the succeeding bodily or mental phenomena, but merely that it is felt to be something distinct from them; in other words, arguing from human consciousness—and we have nothing else to argue from—man possesses a will as well as a body and mind

(2.) *Man's acts are partly determined by his Will.*

In the next place, a man's acts (and also his thoughts) are often determined by his will. By this is meant that a man's will is able to move his limbs, so that, for instance, he can raise his hand when he wishes, and this gives him the power of determining his acts. It is not, of course, meant that a man's will can move his limbs directly; his limbs are moved by his muscles, which are directed by his nerves, and these are excited by motions in the brain. All that the will can do is to give a particular direction to the force engaged in nervous action, which, in conjunction with various other forces, brings about the observed result.

Now we have in favour of this action of the human will on the human body the universal experience of mankind, which is that a man can somehow or other move his limbs at pleasure. Indeed, the question whether a man can walk across the room when he wishes, seems to most persons to admit of a convincing answer: *solvitur ambulando*. But notwithstanding this, the action of will on matter seems so improbable, and so difficult to understand, that attempts have naturally been made to find some other explanation. And these we must now consider. To begin with, it is admitted by every one that changes in a man's will, and material changes in his body, originally in the brain, occur at or near the same time so frequently and so universally, that there must be some reason for this. Now there are only three possible explanations;—that the material changes cause the changes of will; that the changes of will cause the material changes; and that there is no causation either way.

The *first* theory is plainly attended with great difficulties. To assert that volition is *caused* by the motion of the molecules of the brain is to state a proposition which, try as we may, we cannot understand. Vibrations of matter cannot be conceived of as transformed into wishes and resolves. They appear to belong to totally different classes of phenomena, each being inexpressible in terms of the other. And what is more, we can never expect to understand it, no matter what discoveries are made in science. For 'even were we able to

see and feel the molecules of the brain, and to know the corresponding volitions in every case,' we should still be no nearer the solution of the problem.

Moreover, there is this additional difficulty. The conservation of energy would lead us to believe that the physical series of events in the brain is complete in itself. The energy developed is a physical force, and as such can be fully accounted for. In other words, all motions in the brain, as elsewhere, must produce other motions; and there can be no energy over to be turned into volition, unless of course volition is a form of motion. But this seems incredible. For motion is only movement in space of something which itself occupies space, and volition seems distinguished by the very characteristic of not occupying space. A resolve cannot be measured in millimetres. It is thus quite inconceivable to the human mind how material changes can ever cause changes of will.

Nor is the *second* theory of changes of will causing material changes any easier to understand, as the above difficulties are, of course, common to both. There are, however, three arguments in its favour. The first is from analogy, for we have shown that once, at all events, in originating the universe, Volition of some kind, that is, a change of will, was able to produce material changes; whereas we have no evidence that material changes have ever produced a change of will. Of course, this is meant in the strict sense; for in popular language a material change, such as a man's spraining his ankle, frequently produces a change of will, such as his giving up an intended walk.

The next is from human experience, which seems to show that the volition always precedes the action: *e.g.*, I wish to raise my hand, and subsequently do it; not I raise my hand first, and subsequently wish to do it. This alone is not conclusive; for moving the hand resulted from certain movements in the brain, and these, it may be said, were simultaneous with, or previous to, the wish, and possibly produced it. But the presumption is plainly the other way; more especially since the interval between the wish and the corresponding act can be prolonged indefinitely.

The last is from the process of evolution. For if the will is only the effect of material action and never its cause, it is plainly superfluous, and all the material actions might have gone on just as well without any volition at all. But in this case it is almost certain that they would have done so, and that the will would never have been evolved; since, as before shown, evolution cannot perpetuate and perfect what is useless. But the difficulty of imagining how mere volition can produce motion is just as great as imagining how mere motion can produce volition; so that, if there is causation either way, our minds are unable to comprehend it.

The *third* theory is that there is no causation either way, material changes and changes of will merely occurring at the same time. If, for example, I wish to raise my hand, and thereupon do it, the wish may be the result of previous changes of will only, and raising my hand may be the result of previous material changes in my brain only; and there may be no connection between them, except that they happen to occur, or were prearranged to occur, at the same time. This theory is free from the difficulties of the preceding ones; but it has even greater difficulties of its own, for there certainly seems to be a causal connection somewhere between the two classes of events.

It appears, then, that each of the three possible explanations of the relation of human action and human will seems almost inconceivable when we try to realise what it means. And therefore, as one of them must be true, none of them can be pronounced incredible. The balance of probability is distinctly in favour of the second, but this is of little consequence. For when once it is shown that this theory is neither incredible nor very improbable, further argument is needless, since we have in its favour the *daily experience of mankind*, which is that a man's will can, somehow or other, move his limbs, and hence determine his acts.

(3.) *Man's Will is free.*

It must next be noticed that man's will is a *free* will, and this is a most important point. It is quite distinct from the previous question. Then we decided that a man's raising his

hand, for instance, was the result of his wishing to do so. We have now to consider whether this wish was free on the man's part, or whether he could not help it; the latter view being called that of *Necessity* or *Determinism*, and meaning that a man's actions are necessarily determined and not free.

Of course, both the theories of Freedom and Necessity admit that a man's will is influenced by motives or reasons, and always acts in conformity with the strongest; in other words, that the prevailing motive prevails. But the difference between them lies in the ambiguity of this word *motive*. What are all the motives influencing the will? Are they only external, and such as are brought from without to bear upon the will; or are they partly internal, and such as the will may, but need not, evolve out of its own powers, or out of previously acquired materials? Moreover, is their strength of a uniform kind, so that they merely want combining, like physical forces, to yield a resultant? Or do they differ so widely that the will alone can decide as to what is their relative strength; whether, for instance, the motive to yield to some animal passion is stronger than that to sacrifice one's self for the good of others? The former view corresponds to the doctrine of Necessity, the latter to that of Free Will. Of course, in every case a man's birth, education, and surroundings will greatly influence his choice. These have been likened to a player's hand at whist, which he may play well or badly. So a man's free will may make the best or worst of his opportunities. The important point, however, is not what limits there are to the freedom of man's will, but is it free at all?

Now, strange though it may seem, though the freedom of the will appears self-evident to most men, and is taken for granted in all human concerns, no absolute proof can be given of it. Everything can be consistently explained on the opposite theory. For, however much a man may think his choice is free, it can always be said that he could not help deciding as he did. This is admitted. But, on the other hand, no proof can be suggested of the existence of free will which cannot be given. An absolute proof is, from the nature of



the case, unattainable. We are thus obliged to judge by probability; and there are two important arguments on each side, as well as the objection sometimes made that man's freedom would be inconsistent with God's foreknowledge, which has been already examined in Chap. iii.

Now the great argument in favour of free will is, of course, *human consciousness*. It is one of the most universal, and one of the most certain, convictions of mankind that he has free will. This conviction is forced upon him by his own daily experience. He feels, for instance, that he is free to decide whether to raise his hand or not. And this conviction, resting as it does on the daily experience of the human race, cannot be upset by any mere *a priori* arguments showing that it is improbable, or that there are difficulties in understanding how a man's will can be free; for in every case it is more likely that the premises of such reasonings are wrong, rather than the consciousness of mankind.

And the argument is still further strengthened when we consider that man's *belief* in his freedom, which is undisputed, must have had both a cause and a purpose. As to its *cause*, it is hard to see how, on the evolution hypothesis, the belief in human freedom, if untrue, and therefore useless, could ever have been evolved at all. Yet it has been not only evolved, but perfected to such an extent that it now forms an inherent part of human nature. And as to its *purpose*, it is hard to see why God, Who has somehow or other created man, should have implanted in his nature an inherent conviction of falsehood; indeed, to many this appears almost incredible. The argument, then, from consciousness alone seems conclusive that man has free will.

But, as a matter of fact, this argument is amply confirmed, as we should expect it to be, by *human experience*. For experience shows that a man's conduct is variable, and quite unlike the uniformity which we find in all phenomena where admittedly there is no free force, and where everything is brought about in accordance with law (*e.g.*, in inorganic nature). So that, for this reason alone, the existence of some free force in man to account for this variable conduct is not very

unlikely. But it may be objected that human conduct, when considered as a whole, is not variable. Thus, out of every million men, a certain number it is said will always commit suicide. But the inference against free will is quite untenable; for supposing men have free will, there is nothing unlikely in approximately the same number out of every million choosing to act in the same way. And this does not at all resemble the uniformity in inorganic nature, where particles of matter always and invariably act in the same way. These, then, are the two arguments in favour of free will—human consciousness, confirmed by human experience; and no more powerful arguments can be imagined.

On the other hand, the great argument against human freedom is that it would be an *anomaly* in nature. Everywhere else, it is said, we have an invariable sequence of cause and effect. Natural forces always act in the same way, and any free force, able to act or not as it likes, is absolutely unknown. If, then, man possesses such a force, no matter how circumscribed it may be, he is, partly at least, a *supernatural* being, not bound by fixed laws.

Now all this may be admitted, but what then? Is it incredible that man should be a partly supernatural being? Certainly not. For God, Who created man, is a Supernatural Being; He possesses free will, and He might, if He thought fit, bestow some of this special attribute on man. There is certainly no *a priori* reason why He should not do so, while the *a posteriori* reason from experience shows that He actually has done so.

No doubt, to persons who study physical science alone, the existence of any free force in man seems most improbable. But, on the other hand, to those who study the actions of men, such as barristers, judges, or politicians, the idea that man is a mere automaton might seem equally improbable. And does not the same principle apply in other cases? If a man were to study inorganic chemistry alone, living, say, on an island where vegetation was unknown, would not a tree be a complete anomaly to him? And yet trees exist and have to be allowed for. Chemistry has, in consequence, to be divided

into two parts, organic and inorganic, and rules regarding the former are admitted not to apply to the latter. This is plainly the scientific way of treating the phenomenon; and why should not the same method be adopted in regard to man? He is found by consciousness and experience to have free will. This, then, must be admitted and allowed for. The forces we meet with in the universe have, in consequence, to be divided into two groups—those which are fixed, and those which are free; the former including all the invariable forces of nature, and the latter the variable force which man possesses, and which is called his free will. This may be an anomaly, but the evidence for it is overwhelming.

Moreover, the anomaly is greatly lessened by the fact that man already occupies a very anomalous position. Claiming free will for *him* is not like claiming free will for some particular mineral or plant. He is anyhow a unique being, incomparably the highest and most important on this planet; and that he should be partly supernatural as well is not so very unlikely after all.

While, lastly, we must remember that the whole idea of invariable causation is only a deduction of our reasoning. And we know more about ourselves where we are conscious of freedom, than we do about the surrounding universe, where we infer this uniformity. Indeed, our own free will is the only force of which we have any direct knowledge, and the so-called forces of nature (*e.g.*, gravity) are, strictly speaking, only assumptions which we make to account for observed phenomena.

The other important argument against free will is that it would be inconsistent with the *Conservation of Energy*, since it is said any voluntary action would involve the creation of energy. But this is at least doubtful; for the will might be free as to its actions, were it only able to control energy without producing it. And it could do this if it possessed the power of altering either the *time* or the *direction* of force. By altering the time is meant freely choosing the time when an act should take place; deciding, for instance, whether to raise my hand now or a minute hence. And by altering the

direction is meant deciding, for instance, whether to raise my right hand or my left. And if the will possessed either of these powers, a free being would be like a reservoir of latent force, which the will could transform into actual motion when or how it pleased. And thus, though the total energy expended would be the same, the results might be totally different. In short, the will would be free as to its actions, without creating any energy at all.

We must therefore conclude, on reviewing the whole subject, that man's will is free, since this hypothesis alone agrees with the *consciousness* of mankind, and fully accounts for the *variability* of human conduct. While, on the other hand, though an *anomaly* in nature, it is not incredible on that account; nor is it necessarily inconsistent with the *conservation of energy*.

(4.) *Man knows that his Will is free.*

Having now decided that man has a will, that this will is able to influence his actions, and that it is a free will, little need be said about the next point, which is that man knows that his will is free, since, as we have shown, this is the chief argument for admitting its freedom.

There are, however, many other arguments for proving that man believes that he has free will. Indeed, it is shown by all his *actions*. For it is this known freedom which enables a man to set before himself an end, and deliberately work towards it. He feels that by adapting his means and making the most of his opportunities he will be able to accomplish it, and he therefore determines to do so. In short, it enables him to *design*, and makes him a *personal being*, as the term is used in this essay. And it is needless to point out that the evidence of human design is universal. It is shown as plainly in the canoe of a savage as in a modern steamer. Both are objects designed by men who believe that they have free will to construct and to use them as they like.

Again, human *language* affords a conclusive proof that man has always and everywhere believed himself to be free. For not only do such terms as I will, I choose, I decide, exist in all languages; but these and similar expressions are so

essential to conversation, that it is even difficult for any one to argue against free will without using terms which imply that he and his opponent are free. Moreover, the whole of *society* is based on this belief in human freedom. Take, for example, the administration of justice. All this would be a gross injustice but for man's freedom. For if a man has no option about his conduct, he can be neither praised nor blamed for it. There is no virtue in his doing right if he cannot help it, and no vice in his doing wrong if he cannot help it. It would therefore be unjust to reward him for the one, and still more unjust to punish him for the other. And yet some punishment for wrong-doing, such as murder and theft, seems essential to human society. Nor can it be said that this punishment is merely like killing or restraining a noxious animal, which we do for our own safety, and not because we think the animal was to blame. For the law considers not only the crime, but the motive of the criminal (*e.g.*, murder and manslaughter), clearly showing that his free agency is assumed throughout. But it is needless to pursue the argument, since it is undisputed that man *believes* that he has free will.

(5.) *Man's responsibility for his acts.*

We next come to man's responsibility. By this is meant that a man is responsible for the way in which he uses his freedom; and this seems to follow at once from his known freedom. Moreover, it is amply confirmed by human consciousness, for a sense of responsibility seems to be among the inherent convictions of mankind. Of course, there may be a few exceptions to this, as to most other rules; but taking mankind as a whole, he certainly believes in his responsibility. Every one, for instance, has an inward feeling of approval of certain acts and disapproval of others, and this feeling shows that we consider men to be responsible for their acts.

And mankind as a whole believes that this responsibility is primarily to God, or to some other Superior Being. That this is, and always has been, the prevalent idea among both civilised and uncivilised nations will be at once admitted. But it may be said, is not the idea erroneous? Is not man

really responsible to his family, to society, and to the state—in fact, to his fellow-men, rather than to God? In short, does not a proper idea of the *brotherhood of man* explain his responsibility?

Now undoubtedly man is responsible to his fellow-men, more especially to those among whom he is living; but this is not the primary idea. For in extreme cases a man's acts, and frequently his words and thoughts, could not possibly influence his fellow-men; and yet he would feel responsible for them—at least, most men would do so. Moreover, on a *priori* grounds it is far more probable that man should be responsible to his Maker rather than to his fellow-men. A child, for example, is first of all responsible to his parents, and then, secondly and consequently, to his brothers and sisters. In the same way, because God has made us, we are responsible to Him; and because He has placed us among other men, and presumably wishes us to take some part in human society, we are in a lesser degree responsible to them also. So that the brotherhood of man is only a corollary from the Fatherhood of God.

(6.) *Man's moral sense of right and wrong.*

Next, as to man's moral sense of right and wrong. Now it is undeniable that mankind as a species possesses the very remarkable faculty of distinguishing the *quality* of certain acts, and regarding some as right and others as wrong, the latter being called *sins*. And as a similar word to *sin* exists, I believe, in every known language, the idea of there being some right and wrong seems universal, though different nations may differ as to any particular act being right or wrong. And it may be noticed in passing, that the existence of moral evil or sin, which is unfortunately beyond dispute, seems to many to be an additional argument in favour of man's freedom; for otherwise God must be the author of man's sin, which is almost incredible.

Now we will call a being who is thus able to distinguish the quality of acts a *moral being*. Man is therefore a moral being, having this *moral sense*, as it is called, of distinguishing right from wrong. It will perhaps make the meaning of this

moral sense plainer if we compare it with one of man's other senses, say that of sight. The one, then, distinguishes right from wrong, just as the other distinguishes red from yellow or green from blue. And as the fact of mankind possessing the faculty of distinguishing colours is not disproved by one man thinking a colour blue which another thinks green, and some individuals here and there being colour-blind or having lost their eyesight; so the fact of mankind possessing a moral sense is not disproved by one man thinking an act right which another thinks wrong, or possibly by abnormal specimens here and there not recognising any difference between right and wrong. In each case, moreover, the faculty may require training, and one man's moral sense, like his sense of hearing or seeing, may be far more acute than another's. But these are only minor matters. The important point is that mankind as a species possesses a moral sense, which enables him to classify acts as right and wrong.

And this sense of right and wrong, it must be noticed, is quite distinct from the pleasant or unpleasant consequences which are associated with certain acts. For instance, I may avoid putting my hand into hot water, because I remember having done so before, and that it was painful; but this is quite different from avoiding an act because it is wrong. It is also quite distinct from expediency, or the idea of benefiting by an act. Indeed, were it otherwise, a right act would depend on our being able to calculate beforehand its results, so as to see whether they would be expedient or not. But it is needless to say that such a calculation is quite foreign to the idea of right and wrong. In short, 'fifty experiences of what is pleasant or what is profitable do not, and cannot, make one conviction of what is right;' the ideas differ in kind, and not merely in degree.

(7.) *Man's Conscience.*

Lastly, as to man's conscience. This is often confused with his moral sense, but the two are quite distinct, as a little reflection will show. For mankind possesses various other powers of classification besides that of acts into right and wrong. For instance, he can classify trees as exogens and

endogens. But in this case he has no direct means of knowing to which class a particular one belongs; he only arrives at this by reasoning from various observations after the classes themselves have been defined. Now it is possible theoretically for a man to have a moral sense, but yet to be able to classify acts as right and wrong in only the same way, *i.e.*, as the result of reasoning from certain data; and in complicated cases we sometimes do this.

But in the vast majority of cases this is unnecessary. For mankind possesses a very remarkable *something*, called a conscience, which tells him intuitively, and without either argument or reasoning, that certain acts are right and others wrong. Conscience is thus like an organ of the moral sense, and may be compared to the eye or organ of sight; for just as the eye perceives that certain colours are red and others blue, so the conscience perceives that certain acts are right and others wrong. In each case the perception is almost instantaneous, and quite distinct from a deduction from reasoning. Now that mankind as a species possesses a conscience is indisputable. It is shared alike by young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated. It has existed in all ages, countries, and races. And what is more, it not only tells us what acts are right and what wrong, but it approves definitely of our doing the former and disapproves just as definitely of our doing the latter. And hence, as many of us do wrong more often than we do right, the most frequent and striking action of conscience is the feeling of self-condemnation after wrongdoing. And such a feeling is practically universal.

These, then, are the moral phenomena characteristic of the human race, and it follows at once that man is a *free and responsible being*. But as this conclusion is often objected to, because of the similarity between animals and men, and the difficulty of admitting that they also are free and responsible beings, or else of showing wherein the distinction lies, we must examine this subject.

#### (C.) THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANIMALS AND MEN.

It will be convenient, as before, to consider bodily, mental, and moral characteristics separately, though with regard to



the two former little need be said. The *bodily* difference between certain animals and men is admittedly small; and if, as many think probable, both were evolved from some earlier form of life, it is plainly unessential. And though the accompanying *mental* difference is enormous, it is doubtful whether it is one of kind or only of degree. The latter is perhaps the more probable, though we cannot speak for certain. Nor can we say for certain how this difference arose, though, if only one of degree, it may possibly have been due to some process of evolution. Anyhow, bodily and mental phenomena do not seem to be the distinguishing feature between animals and men.

Passing on now to the *moral* characteristics of animals, our knowledge is, and always must be, imperfect; for we can know nothing of an animal's consciousness, which is the basis of argument in regard to man. Referring, however, to the previous analysis, the following appear to be the most probable conclusions. To begin with, it seems likely that animals, or at all events the higher ones, such as monkeys, horses, and dogs, have a *will*, or something which corresponds to it; that their actions are partly *determined* by this will, and that it is a *free* will. Of course, no proof can be given of all this, since the reason for believing the similar propositions in regard to man is chiefly his consciousness. But considering the variable conduct of animals, so unlike that of automata, and so like that of men possessing free will, it seems probable that they also possess such a will, though doubtless it is more circumscribed.

Indeed, freedom to some slight extent may be the characteristic of all organic life, including both plants and animals. For variation, though slight, is universal. 'No two trees in a forest, no two leaves on a tree, are exactly alike.' And the whole theory of evolution is based on this very fact of variability, which is unlike any property of any part of inorganic nature; while the term Natural Selection seems of itself to imply a power to select, or a free choice. It is not improbable, then, that the unknown something which distinguishes living matter from dead matter may always involve

a certain amount of freedom. But however this may be, it certainly seems probable that the higher animals possess a free will; at all events, we are willing to admit it for the sake of argument.

But with regard to the next point of *known* freedom, not only is there no reason, except of course human analogy, for thinking that animals possess this, but there are strong reasons for thinking they do not. For it will be remembered that the proof of man's known freedom does not depend solely on his consciousness. It is shown by his acts, for it enables him to *design*—i.e., to work towards a foreseen end—and there is nothing corresponding to this in animals. For though many of their works undoubtedly show design somewhere, it does not appear to be due to them. This kind of unconscious designing is called *instinct*, and there are four reasons for thinking that it differs from real design implying forethought.

The first is, that it is by no means strongest in the most intelligent animals, such as monkeys, horses, and dogs. On the contrary, this kind of designing seems to decrease in the scale of animal life, just as real intelligence increases. And this is very remarkable, and of itself suggests that there must be some difference between the two.

The next is, that animals are only able to design in a few special cases. For example, a bird can construct her nest admirably, but she cannot, or at all events does not, apply similar constructive genius to any other purpose. In the same way, a bee will build its hive on the most perfect mathematical principles, but it cannot apply its mathematics to anything else. Similarly, a spider and its web, and many other instances, might be given. This makes it probable that such works are due to some special and particular cause, which is called *instinct*, and do not result from the animal's possessing a known freedom of action, which would enable it to design equally well in other cases.

And thirdly, this is confirmed by the fact that, if these works resulted from the design of the animals themselves, they must possess intellectual powers of a very high order.

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But this is quite untenable, since many of these same animals act in other respects with the greatest stupidity. A bee, for instance, with all its mathematics, cannot very often, if it has flown in through an open window, retrace its way, but will buzz helplessly against another which is shut.

And fourthly, even in these few cases there is no gradual improvement in what the animal does. The last cell built by a bee is no better than the first, and no better, as far as we know, than cells built by bees thousands of years ago. The bee gains nothing by experience; it never makes an alteration by way of improvement on what it did before; whereas man, in consequence of his known freedom, is always trying to improve upon his previous works. Animals are thus like *producers*, who work by a rule given to them, and not like *creators*, who design for themselves, and profit by their previous experience. Plainly, then, an animal's instinct is born with it, and not acquired; and therefore, any apparent design there may be in what is done by instinct cannot be attributed to the animal itself, any more than the design shown in its eyes and other organs, but to its Maker.

But it may be urged that in some of the higher animals, especially those in contact with man, we find certain acts which do seem to imply forethought and design. For example, a dog will bury a bone one day and go and look for it the next. But when once it is admitted that what are apparently far more striking instances of design are to be explained by instinct, it seems more probable that these are to be explained in the same way. On the whole, then, we conclude that though animals have, or may have, a free will, it is not a *known* freedom, because they are not able, like men, to *design*, and are hence not *personal beings*.

And this conclusion is strengthened by the fact that animals do not exhibit any of those phenomena which in man result from his known freedom. Thus they do not appear to have any sense of *responsibility*. Of course, it may be objected that as we punish a dog for doing what we dislike, it implies that we hold him responsible for the act. But this does not follow. The punishment may only appeal to the dog's association of

ideas. The dog, like other animals, has a natural impulse to avoid pain, and therefore it avoids the act which its memory associates with pain without necessarily feeling responsible for it. And this is confirmed by the fact that if the punishment is long delayed, it has no deterrent effect whatever.

Nor, again, do animals appear to have any moral sense of *right* and *wrong*, or any *conscience*. Here also it may be objected, that as a dog seems pleased if praised for a good act, it shows that he has some inward sense of having done right, or what in man we should call an approving conscience. But again the conclusion does not follow. For a dog is equally well pleased if praised for a bad act; which makes it clear that it is the fact of being praised which pleases him, quite apart from any inward sense of having deserved it. These apparent exceptions, then, can be satisfactorily explained; though even if they could not, they would be quite insufficient to outweigh the numberless instances on the other side. For in the vast majority of cases we never think of holding an animal responsible for its acts, or look upon its injuring any one as a sin.

We conclude, then, that moral phenomena form the great distinction between animals and men. And this conclusion is strengthened by the difficulties in the way of any *moral evolution* between the two. These are not perhaps insuperable, but they are certainly greater than those of mental evolution. For in the one case we have only to account for a very great development in the same kind of phenomena; while in the other we have to account for their reversal in many cases, and this in spite of heredity, which would have fixed them the stronger. For instance, to quote but one example, animals probably think that *might* is *right* in popular language; but the whole principle of morality is directly opposed to this, and teaches us that *might* is not *right*, and can never become so.

We may now sum up the probable difference between animals and men. The latter exhibit bodily phenomena very similar to those of animals; mental phenomena vastly superior to those of animals, though probably of the same kind; and

moral phenomena quite distinct from those of animals. Indeed, if animals do not possess a known freedom, they cannot be said to have any moral character at all.

Three concluding remarks may be made before leaving this subject. The first is, that though we have admitted that animals possess a free will, the question is really a doubtful one. If, however, any one denies it, this will merely increase the difference between animals and men; and therefore the subsequent arguments in this essay, where stress is laid on this difference, will become proportionally stronger.

The second is with regard to *known* freedom. There are no doubt difficulties in placing even this difference between animals and men; but there are as great, if not greater, difficulties in placing it anywhere else. If we say that an ape or a dog can design, the difficulty is not lessened; it is merely transferred lower down the scale. Can a jellyfish design? and if so, can an oak or a seaweed? The momentous attribute of known freedom, unless it is common to all life, which is most improbable, must begin *somewhere*; and it seems less difficult to place it between animals and men than anywhere else.

The third and most important point is, that our ignorance about animals is no reason for doubting what we do know about man. To do this would be most illogical. Indeed, we might as well deny that a man could see, or hear, or remember, because there are difficulties in deciding where sight and hearing and memory commence in the scale of animal life.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

We may now conclude this chapter. With regard to man, it is clear that the bodily, mental, and moral phenomena belong to different classes, each being inexpressible in terms of the others. A man may be strong in body, and yet of weak intellectual power; or, again, a man may have great intellect, and yet be of weak moral character. This makes it probable that his nature is really *tri-partite*, the three constituents being best expressed as *body*, *mind*, and *spirit*; the mind corresponding of course to the mental reasoning part of man, and the spirit to the free moral part. We have

avoided using the word *soul* because of its ambiguity, some writers employing it for mind, some for spirit, and some for both. And the difference between animals and men is probably that the former have no spirits, their nature being only *bi-partite*. This is, of course, only a conjecture, but it seems a probable one. For if we admit that animals, though free, are not conscious of their freedom, and have therefore no moral nature, the most obvious conclusion is that they have nothing which is capable of this conscious knowledge, and the feeling of responsibility which it entails.

And it may be pointed out in passing that, as man's body and mind are both under the partial and known control of his free will, this latter must be looked upon as his essential part. Thus a man is not strictly speaking an organism at all, but a free being served by organs both of body and mind. 'They are *his*,' they do not constitute *him*.' He is the personal being, the free will conscious of its freedom, which controls both. It is unnecessary, however, to this argument to establish the tri-partite nature of man. It is merely alluded to as a probable hypothesis to explain the three classes of observed facts, and is anyhow a convenient method of arranging them.

But however this may be, our present conclusion is quite plain. We have shown that man is a *free* being, his freedom distinguishing him from all natural forces, and making him in part supernatural. And he is a *responsible* being, his responsibility being due to his known freedom, and distinguishing him from all animals. Or, to put it more concisely, his freedom separates him from inanimate nature, and his responsibility from the rest of animate nature. He has thus a unique position. Nothing else on this planet resembles him, and in his attribute of known freedom which enables him to design, and therefore makes him a *personal being*, he resembles God alone.

And if we assume that man, with all his marvellous attributes, has been evolved, together with other beings, from the earliest form of life on this planet, it seems only to increase

his importance. Every other being is then brought into one grand series which leads up to man. He is the heir of all the ages, the inheritor of those thousands of useful adaptations which have been perfected by his long line of ancestors. And the vast scheme of evolution, inconceivable alike in magnitude, in duration, and in complexity, is thus seen to be one plan, with *man* apparently at the end of it.

## CHAPTER VI

### THAT GOD TAKES AN INTEREST IN MAN'S WELFARE

#### (A.) THE EVIDENCE IN ITS FAVOUR.

Since God is a *Moral* as well as a Personal Being, He must be capable of caring for all His creatures. (1) And it is probable that He would do so, especially for man; (2) while the marks of beneficent design seem to prove the point. But there is one great difficulty.

#### (B.) THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL.

(a.) Physical evil in animals. The objection that it is vast in amount, wholly unmerited, and perfectly useless, cannot be maintained.

(b.) Physical evil in man. Often caused by moral evil. Several ways of lessening the difficulty. Its explanation seems to be that God's designing evil does not mean His desiring it, as it is essential for forming a man's character.

(c.) Moral evil in man. Also designed but not desired, as it is essential to free will; and wicked men are as necessary as any other form of evil.

#### (C.) THE PROBABILITY OF A FUTURE LIFE.

Several arguments in favour of this; and it may account for the unmerited suffering in this world.

#### (D.) CONCLUSION.

God's Goodness includes both Beneficence and Righteousness.

HAVING discussed in the last chapter the character of man, we have next to consider, as far as we have any means of doing so, the *Character of God*; more especially whether He seems to take any interest in man's welfare. And we will first examine the evidence in favour of this; then the great argument on the other side from the existence of evil; and lastly, the probable explanation of the difficulty afforded by a future life.



## (A.) THE EVIDENCE IN ITS FAVOUR.

To begin with, God is certainly capable of taking an interest in man's welfare, for He is not only a Personal Being, but a *Moral* Being also. This follows at once from the last chapter, where it was shown that man is a moral being. It will be remembered that a moral being is one who can distinguish between the quality of acts, classing some as right, and others as wrong. And considering that man himself possesses this remarkable faculty, it is almost certain that man's Maker must do the same. For this faculty differs in kind from all physical and mental faculties, and cannot therefore have been evolved from them alone. In other words, physical and mental forces can never by any possible combination produce out of themselves that which was never in them—the idea of right and wrong. So that a moral man implies a moral God.

And the same conclusion may be arrived at from various other arguments, especially from man's conscience. For instance, man feels convinced that he ought to act right. But that he *ought* to do so merely means that he *owes* it, or is under an obligation to some one to do so. But man can only be under an obligation to those who have benefited him; and a permanent obligation, such as that of acting right, can only be felt towards God, Who is man's great Benefactor, and to Whom he owes everything he possesses. Man, then, owes it to God to act right. In other words, it is his *duty*, or what is *due* from him. But why to act right? The only possible answer is that this is the way God wishes him to act. But if so, He must be a Moral Being, capable of distinguishing the quality of acts. In short, man's responsibility to a Moral God can explain this inherent sense of duty, which without this responsibility can only be explained away.

It will of course be noticed that we are not appealing to these arguments, as is sometimes done, to show the existence of God, but merely as affording some evidence as to His character; and, as we have said, they show conclusively that He is a Moral Being. Now a personal and moral God

must certainly be able to take an interest in the welfare of His creatures; and, as we shall see, it is not only probable that He would do so, but nature affords abundant evidence that this is actually the case.

(1.) *The antecedent probability.*—In the first place, it is distinctly probable that God would care for all the beings whom He has created; or why should He have created them? And the probability that He would care for *man*, who, like Himself, is a personal and moral being, and whom He has thus endowed with some of His own attributes, is of course much greater. Moreover, we have no knowledge scientifically of any other being in the universe who is either personal or moral; so that, though man may be quite unworthy of God's care, we know of no other being who is more worthy of it. And it is scarcely likely that a Creator would not take an interest in *any* of His works.

And this argument is strengthened by the analogy of human parents caring for their children, which is obviously the most appropriate that can be suggested; for here also we have a relationship between two personal and moral beings, one of whom is the producer, though not in this case the creator, of the other. We have thus a very strong *a priori* argument in favour of God's taking an interest in man's welfare.

But an objection has now to be considered arising from the *insignificance* of man. Though he is doubtless by far the most important being on this planet, and endowed with some of the divine attributes; yet, after all, how utterly insignificant he is in comparison with his Maker. This is no new difficulty,<sup>1</sup> but modern science has increased its force. And it is urged that for God to take any great interest in man or other beings on this earth is most unlikely, for our planet is but one member of the solar system, which again is itself a mere unit in the universe of stars. To expect, then, that God should take any great interest in this earth is like expecting the sovereign of a vast empire to take a

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 8. 3, 4.

great interest in some particular member of an obscure village family. But this objection can scarcely be maintained, for there is no reason why the sovereign, however powerful, should not take an interest in every one of his subjects, except that his knowledge and capacities are all limited. And thus, if his subjects are numerous, he is unable, not unwilling, to take an interest in them all. But with the Creator the case is precisely the opposite to this. All His capacities are infinite, and He of necessity knows fully the whole of the circumstances regarding every being, for they were all designed by Him; and therefore He may take a great interest in them all.

And this *a priori* argument is confirmed by *observation*. For all through Nature we find nothing resembling a neglect of small things. On the contrary, everything, down to the minutest insect, seems finished with as much perfection as if it alone existed in the universe. True greatness does not consist in despising that which is small; and it may be a very part of God's infinite greatness that nothing should be too small for Him to care about, just as nothing is too large. Moreover, we have no means of knowing what God considers great or small. Strictly speaking, an atom and a universe are alike insignificant to the Infinite God. And a child possessing a free will, and therefore made to some extent in His own image, may be in God's sight more important than a universe of dead matter.

There is, of course, no antecedent reason why He should take any *special* interest in the beings on this planet more than in similar beings on other planets, if such exist. But however numerous such other planets may be, and even assuming them all to share alike, it does not in the slightest degree diminish the interest He may take in this planet; for, as said above, His capacities are infinite.

(2.) *The marks of beneficent design.*—We pass on now to the other argument arising from the marks of beneficent design. And here the evidence seems overwhelming. Everywhere in nature, and especially in man, we meet with apparent marks, not only of design, but of *beneficent* design—that is,

of design tending to the welfare and happiness of the beings in question.

We will, as before, consider a single example only, and select the *human eye*. In chapter iii. we examined this organ as showing the foresight of the Creator; we will now consider it as showing His beneficence. As before explained, all the various and complicated parts of the eye agree in this one particular only, that they all conduce to enable man to see. And the inference from this, that God, Who somehow or other brought all these parts together, did so with the intention of enabling man to see, is irresistible. And the further conclusion that God's object in thus enabling man to see, or at least the chief object, was to conduce to his welfare, is equally obvious. And of course this argument, like the previous one, is not affected by the method in which the eye has been produced; for if the result is beneficial to man, the inference that God, Who somehow or other brought it about, wished to benefit man, remains the same.

But two objections are sometimes made to this argument. The first is, that the human eye has some *imperfections*, in being liable to various kinds of disease and accident. This is of course true. But these imperfections are incidental to the construction of the eye, and not the object of its construction. The eye was made to see and not to ache. That it does ache now and then is in all probability necessarily dependent on its being such a delicate instrument. And very possibly the more perfect an eye is, the greater will be the number of ways in which it may get out of order by disease or accident. And therefore our eyes being liable to this does not in the least disprove that God wished to benefit us by giving us such good eyes.

The other objection is that even theoretically *better* eyes are possible. This also is true; for though the eye is a marvellous optical instrument, it is not an ideally perfect one. There are, for instance, long-sight, short-sight, and colour-blindness; and it is quite possible to imagine means for preventing these. Again, the eye might have been provided with microscopic and telescopic lenses, to be brought into use when

wanted; though, with these extra improvements, the chances of the eye getting out of order might be necessarily increased. Moreover, if the eye had all these, it would still be possible to suggest other improvements. But all this is beside the question. For the eye, as it is, enables man to see on the whole remarkably well, and in a way quite suited to his requirements. And the fact that it might possibly have been better, does not prevent us from concluding that God, Who, directly or indirectly, made the eye, did so with a view to man's welfare.

In the next place, it must be noticed that the argument is a *cumulative* one. Instances like the above might be multiplied indefinitely, especially from the higher organisms and from man, each instance being independent of the others, and independently leading to the same conclusion. Thus God not only takes a great interest in His creatures, but on the whole it is a beneficent interest, at all events in regard to man and the higher animals, since the organs showing marks of design tend to their welfare and happiness.

But it may be said these beneficent organs are not the only ones we meet with in nature. There are others which are hurtful and useless; and how are these to be accounted for? By the *hurtful* organs are meant those like the claws and teeth of wild animals, which, it might be said, were designed to give pain to other creatures. But this is quite untenable. They were plainly designed to enable the animal to secure its food, and are perhaps necessary for that purpose, and they all tend to the welfare of their possessor.

By the *useless* organs are meant a few organs, such as the male *mammæ*, which seem useless, and therefore detrimental to their own possessor, since they require nourishment which would otherwise go to the useful structures. The existence of such organs cannot be disputed, but their number and importance are so extremely small, that, were they totally unaccounted for, they would not affect the general conclusion. But what is at all events a possible explanation can be given. It is that, on the evolution hypothesis, the occasional existence of such organs is perhaps inevitable; for they may be a

necessary consequence of this general, and on the whole beneficial, process. An analogy from mathematics may help to show the possible necessity of useless organs. Suppose a body is moving in a hyperbola round a centre of force. The only possible equation to this curve of a simple character<sup>1</sup> gives also the other branch of the hyperbola, which is quite useless as far as the body is concerned. Yet it cannot be avoided, and the equation to the useful curve is bound to include the useless one as well. In the same way, if God chose to produce various organisms from earlier forms by the method of evolution, the existence of some useless organs may be inevitable.

We may now sum up the argument thus far. No doubt it seems improbable at first sight that such a Being as God should take any interest in such utterly insignificant beings as men and animals; but then it also seems improbable that He should have designed and created such beings. Yet He has done so; and having created them, there is at most only a very slight additional improbability that He should care for their welfare. And this is not nearly enough to outweigh the numberless marks of beneficent design which show that He actually does so. We hence conclude that God takes an interest in the welfare of all His creatures, more especially in that of *man*, who is, as far as we know, not only the most important of them, but the only one whom the Creator has made a personal and moral being, and thus in some respects like Himself.

#### (B.) THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL.

But a formidable objection has now to be considered. The world, it is said, is full of pain and misery, and is not this fatal to its having been designed and created by a God Who cares for the welfare of His creatures? Or, to put the objection in other words, does not the existence of this evil, or indeed of any evil at all, using that word in its widest sense, show that God either could not or would not prevent it? If He *could* not, He is not All-Powerful; if He *would*

<sup>1</sup> Excluding such forms as  $\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$  <sup>vz</sup>

not, He is not All-Good. This is an undoubted difficulty; and, considering its importance, we will examine it in detail, both as it affects animals and men.

But it may be remarked at starting that the difficulty is common to all theories. For though the idea that all this evil is due to a *beneficent* God seems improbable, the opposite idea that the world was designed by a *bad* Being, who wishes men to be miserable, is out of the question. Every happiness in life contradicts it. While the only other alternative, that the Supreme Being is *indifferent*, and does not care whether man is happy or miserable, seems also improbable, since He has Himself made us capable of feeling pleasure and pain, and keenly sensitive to both. And if this difficulty is urged as opposed to Theism altogether, or the existence of any Supreme Being, it must be remembered that if Theism does not account for it satisfactorily, neither Atheism nor Agnosticism can account for it at all. When considered by itself it leads towards Dualism, or the eternal existence of both a Good and an Evil Power. But the unity of nature is hopelessly opposed to such a view. Moreover, the difficulty, though great, is by no means insuperable.

(a.) *Physical evil in animals.*

The objection here is that animals of all kinds suffer a *vast amount* of pain and misery, which is wholly *unmerited* and perfectly *useless*; since, having no moral nature, they can neither deserve pain nor profit by it. We will consider these three points in turn, only remarking that the misery which man inflicts on certain animals must of course be excluded at present, since man alone is responsible for this.

And first as to the *extent* to which animals suffer. Here we admittedly know but little. That animals appear to suffer greatly, *e.g.*, a mouse being caught by a cat, is obvious; but how far they really suffer is doubtful. Their feelings are far less sensitive than those of man. This is obvious when we reflect that suffering is connected with the brain, as is shown by the fact that savages suffer much less than civilised nations. And therefore we should expect animals, whose mental development is far less advanced, to

suffer still less ; while the lower forms of life we should not expect to suffer at all.

And this is confirmed by *observation*. For domestic animals which are partly trained and civilised, such as horses and dogs, appear to be capable of suffering far more than corresponding wild animals, and low down in the scale of life the sense of pain seems to be entirely absent. Several facts have been observed which almost force us to this conclusion. For instance, a crab will continue to eat, and apparently relish, a smaller crab, while being itself slowly devoured by a larger one ; and this clearly shows that the crab can feel scarcely any pain, since the almost universal effect of pain is to destroy the pleasure of eating. And many other instances are known.<sup>1</sup> The only argument on the other side is that the bodies of the lower animals when ill-treated appear to writhe as if in great pain ; but in many cases there is certainly no pain at all. For instance, if a worm is cut in half, the tail end, just as much as the other, will writhe, though obviously it can feel no pain. The case is doubtless analogous to that of a sensitive plant shrinking from touch, or a gelatinous body quivering when struck.

Moreover, animals, except domestic ones, appear to have no *anticipation* of suffering, and no power of concentrating their thoughts upon it, which increases it so greatly in man. And assuming, with reference to the above example, that the mouse is not to live always, its being destroyed by a cat is at most a very short misery, and perhaps involving altogether less pain than if it died from acute disease or gradual decay. On the whole, then, it seems probable that pain in the animal world is far less than is commonly assumed, and in the lower forms of life entirely absent.

Still it may be said this lessens the difficulty, but it does not remove it. For why should animals suffer pain at all ? It is, as far as we can judge, wholly *unmerited*, since, having no moral nature, and therefore no responsibility, they

<sup>1</sup> Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xxv. p. 257.



cannot have done anything wrong to deserve it. But it should be remembered that if the pain which animals suffer is unmerited, the pleasure which they enjoy is also unmerited. The two must in all fairness be taken together. Indeed, it is probable that were there no capacity for pain, there would be no capacity for pleasure, for the same nervous system gives rise to both. Thus the vegetable world can neither enjoy life nor suffer pain, while the higher animals can do both; and as a matter of fact, they seem to have a much greater amount of pleasure than pain. Animal life is, as a rule, one of uninterrupted enjoyment, and probably, at any given moment, the number of animals of any species that are happy is incomparably greater than those that are miserable. In short, health and happiness is the rule, sickness and pain the exception.

Nor can it be said that pain is *useless* to animals; for though they have no moral nature to be improved, they have a physical nature to be preserved and transmitted, and the sense of pain may be essential to this. Indeed, on the evolution hypothesis this can scarcely be disputed; for the sense of pain undoubtedly increases as we ascend in the scale of life; and it must therefore of necessity be beneficial to the species, since only those results which are beneficial are thus perpetuated and developed. Nor is it difficult to see how this may be. For pain is a kind of sentinel, warning animals of dangers which, if unheeded, might lead to their destruction. For example, if animals felt no pain from excessive heat, they might not escape when a forest was burning; or again, if they felt no pain from hunger, they might die of starvation; and the same applies in other cases. We have, then, no sufficient reason for saying that the pain which animals suffer is useless; and with this the last and most important part of the objection falls to the ground.

(b.) *Physical evil in man.*

We now pass on to the case of man. We necessarily know a great deal of the suffering which he endures. The struggling lives, the painful diseases, the lingering deaths, not to mention accidents of all kinds, are but too evident.

And it may be asked, would an Omnipotent God, Who cared for man's welfare, have ever designed all this ?

Now it is important to remember that a great deal of physical evil originates in *moral* evil. By far the greater part of the pain and misery which man endures is probably brought about by his own wickedness and folly. It is his doing, and not God's ; and therefore he thoroughly deserves it. For example, a man knows that if he commits certain wrong acts, disregarding the laws of health, &c., he will most likely be miserable in consequence. And if he still chooses to commit these acts, it is hard to see how he can blame any one but himself. Moreover, another large part of a man's misery is produced by his fellow-men, either directly or indirectly. It is their doing, and not God's ; and they alone must be blamed for it.

But even excluding all this, there still appears to be a vast amount of human suffering for which man himself is in no way responsible. This is the difficulty we have to face, though it is by no means so great as it seems. To begin with, many of the so-called evils of life do not imply any actual suffering at all, but merely an *imperfection* or absence of pleasure. For example, if a man loses the sight of one eye, he need not have any pain ; and were he originally blind, the possession of even one eye would have been looked upon as a priceless blessing. But being always accustomed to the greater blessing of having two eyes, the lesser blessing of having only one is looked upon as an affliction. And the same argument applies in a vast number of cases. Again, however great may be the sufferings of life, they cannot be as great as its *joys*, since nearly every one wishes to go on living. The number of men who commit suicide or who honestly wish for annihilation is very small ; while it is undeniable that human pain, like that of animals, is most *useful*, serving to warn men of dangers and diseases which, if unheeded, would lead to their destruction.

Moreover, in a material world like ours, if the forces of nature act according to fixed laws, a certain amount of suffering seems *inevitable*. If, for example, the force of gravity

always and invariably acts as it does, it will occasionally cause a tower to fall and injure some one. Such an event could only be avoided by making the forces of nature variable, and endowing them with discrimination; or else by God's continually interfering with them, or, in popular language, working miracles. Either of these alternatives, it need hardly be said, would render all human life a hopeless confusion. While at present, owing to these forces being invariable, a great deal of the evil which might otherwise result from them can be foreseen and avoided. Thus we may say that human suffering, excluding that due to man himself, is by no means so great as it seems; that it is, as a rule, more than counterbalanced by human happiness; and that a certain amount seems not only useful, but in a world like ours inevitable.

But though all these considerations are undoubtedly true, and undoubtedly lessen the difficulty, they do not remove it altogether. For the fact remains, that all through this world pain and pleasure, misery and happiness, are mixed together. And how is this to be accounted for if the world was designed by a Being who is All-Good as well as All-Powerful? The following appears to be the true explanation.

In the first place, though it is plain that God must have *designed* all this suffering when He originated the universe, there is no reason whatever for saying that He *desired* it. All we can say is, that as He foreknew all the results that would follow, He must presumably have approved of the scheme as a whole, or He would not have started it. But He need not have approved of every item in it, for some of the items may be necessarily linked to some others of which He did approve, and could not possibly be separated from them. And thus, though He designed everything, He did not necessarily desire everything, but only desired it as a whole. And therefore, if we find any particular part which He seems not to have desired, we can only conclude that there must be something else necessarily connected with this which He desired so much as to more than counterbalance it. Now in the case before us, God does not seem to have desired physical evils, and yet they exist. We must therefore con-

clude that there must be something else necessarily connected with these evils, which He valued so highly as to more than counterbalance them.

Nor is it difficult to suggest what this *something else* may have been. For man is a free being, and a great deal of the pain and suffering he endures is not, strictly speaking, an evil at all. It is a means of forming his character, and is, as far as we can judge, absolutely essential to all that is highest and noblest in that character. If there were no suffering in the world, there could be no fortitude, no bravery, no patience, no self-sacrifice for the good of others—nothing, in fact, that constitutes the highest type of man. In other words, a being such as man can only be made perfect through suffering. And therefore this suffering implies no defect in God's design. It is, as said above, a means, and, as far as we can see, the only possible means, for developing the highest character in man, such a character indeed as alone makes him worthy of admiration.

Here, then, we have the most probable explanation of the physical evils which man endures. Their object is to develop and perfect his character; and as this is in itself a good object, and as it cannot be obtained in any other way, they may well have been designed by a beneficent God.

(c.) *Moral evil in man.*

But it may be urged that, even admitting the necessity and value of physical evils, these are greatly aggravated by *moral* evil—that is, by a man wilfully causing misery to himself and others—and might not this have been avoided? Or, to put it shortly, could not all *sin* have been excluded from the world? But much the same answer applies here as in the previous case. And assuming man to be a *free being*, it could not have been avoided, for free agency is necessarily liable to abuse. In other words, if God decided that man was to be free in some cases to act right or wrong, then it necessarily follows that he may act wrong. No Omnipotence could possibly alter this without destroying man's freedom. And hence, though the Creator *designed* all the moral evil in the world, He need not have *desired* it, but may have desired some totally

different object, for the attainment of which, however, the existence of this evil was a necessary condition.

Nor, again, is it difficult to suggest what this object may have been. For unless man is a free being, he can be little better than a machine. And God may not have wished that man, who is, as far as we know, His highest and noblest work, should be merely a machine. He may not care to be served by men who cannot help serving Him. Indeed, the superior state of men who act right, though they might act wrong, to mere machines is obvious to all; and it may far outweigh the disadvantage that some of them should act wrong.

Nor is there anything unlikely in the Creator thus caring about the conduct of His creatures. We certainly should not admire an earthly ruler who regarded traitors to his cause and his most faithful adherents with the same indifference; nor an earthly parent who was unconcerned as to whether his children obeyed him or not. And why should we think that God, Who has not only given us free will, but also a conscience by which to know what is right (*i.e.*, what is *His* will), should yet be indifferent as to whether we do it or not? Everything points the other way, that God, Who is a Moral Being, and Who has made us moral beings also, wishes us to voluntarily act right. And therefore of necessity He allows us to act wrong, with all its consequent miseries, in order to render possible our freely choosing to act right, since this could not be rendered possible in any other manner.

And this is confirmed by the fact that God, as the Author of Nature, seems in some cases to have *annexed* certain diseases, or punishments, as we may call them, to certain wrong acts. And therefore, as suffering is a great deterrent from sin, His making it thus follow sin as a natural consequence is a distinct indication of His goodness; for it shows that He wishes man to be virtuous as well as happy, and not to misuse his freedom.

But as to what was God's ultimate object in the creation of free beings, we can say nothing for certain. Possibly He wished to enable man himself to have the immense happiness

of freely choosing to serve his Maker—a happiness greater perhaps than any other which is possible for a created being. Or possibly He wished hereafter to be surrounded by men who had thus freely given themselves to Him, and who had proved their fidelity by enduring suffering, and even death, for His sake. And if so, it is plain that their being given free will and then placed on probation in an evil world was a necessary condition of the problem.

Lastly, as to *wicked men*. This is no doubt the most difficult part of the subject. But it must be remembered that, with regard to the conduct of free beings, *foreknowing* is not the same as *foreordaining*. God may have foreknown how a man would use or misuse his freedom without foreordaining or foreordering him to do either, since his conduct is by hypothesis free. In the same way, if a master gives a boy a holiday, he may in some cases and to some extent foreknow what the boy intends doing, but without in any way foreordaining him to do it, since he allows the boy to do what he likes. This is a most important distinction, and we have no reason whatever for saying that God foreordained any man to misuse his freedom, though He may have foreknown that he would do so.

And if it be urged that, as God foreknew how men would use their free will, He need not have created those who would use it wrongly, the answer is obvious. Wicked men seem as necessary, perhaps more so, than any other form of evil to test a man's character. Moral perfection consists, partly at least, in being able to resist evil companions, and in daring to stand alone for an unpopular cause. And all this would be impossible if men had nothing but physical evils to contend with, and there were only good men in the world. And as to the amount of moral evil, though it seems to us excessive, we have no means of judging whether it is really so, since the greater the amount of moral evil so much the greater is the moral good in resisting it. The case then stands thus. Evil men are essential to an evil world. An evil world is essential to proving a man's character. Proving a man's character is essential to his freely choosing to serve God; and his freely

choosing to serve God seems essential to his being such a servant as God would care to have.

(C.) THE PROBABILITY OF A FUTURE LIFE.

One important question has still to be considered. It is, that the suffering in this world seems *unfairly distributed*, and does not befall different men in the proportion which they deserve. This is an undoubted and serious difficulty. For, as we have seen, God is a Moral Being, capable of distinguishing right from wrong; and if the conscience He has given us is any guide in the matter, which it surely is, He is a Being who will always act right Himself. And yet His treatment of men in this world seems most unjust. Wicked men are often allowed to prosper by their wickedness, good men suffer unjustly; and, what is worse, wicked men are sometimes permitted to murder their fellow-men who are far better than themselves. And how is all this to be accounted for?

There is one and only one satisfactory explanation, which is, that this life is not the whole of man's existence, but only a *preparation* for a future life. It is a time in which to form his character; a short trial for a long hereafter. Nor is this idea unreasonable. For just as childhood and youth are a state of probation for mature age, so the whole of this life may be a state of probation for a future life. And just as the hardships and discipline of youth, such as a child's learning to read, are essential to enable it to share in the higher and intellectual joys of mature age, so the discipline and trials of this life may be essential to enable us to share in the still higher joys of the future life.

Now, looked at from this point of view, the most apparently miserable lives may afford as valuable training, perhaps more so, than the outwardly happy ones. The temptation to dishonesty, for example, can be as well resisted by a poor man who is only tempted to steal sixpence, as by a rich man who is tempted to embezzle a thousand pounds. And if resisting such a temptation helps to form a man's character, as it certainly does, and hence to fit him for a better life hereafter, this can be as well done in the one case as in the other. And the same principle applies universally. Indeed,

on the *Probation Theory* no pain can be looked upon as useless, and no position in this world as one to be despised; so that to the Theist who believes in a future state life is always worth living.

Is, then, such a belief at all probable for other reasons? To begin with, it is certainly not *incredible*; for we each feel that we have existed the same persons for many years, in spite of the constant change in every particle of our bodies, including our brains. So it is not incredible that we shall survive the still greater change at death. Indeed, the change, whatever it is, can scarcely be greater than that which birds and insects undergo, and which we ourselves underwent, at birth. The idea of a future life, then, is certainly credible; and, in addition to the present argument, there are four others which tend to make it slightly probable.

The first is from man's *unique position*. For he is undoubtedly the highest and noblest being on this earth, and hence the most worthy of surviving permanently. And yet the human race cannot exist for ever as it is. Everything points to this planet being sooner or later absorbed into the sun, when all forms of life must cease. And therefore, if man's spirit is not immortal, the vast scheme of Evolution which has been going on here for countless ages will have had no permanent result. But if, on the other hand, man is immortal, and if this earth, with all its marvellous forms of life and its strange mixture of good and evil, is a suitable place in which to form his character, then its creation does not seem such a hopeless mystery as on the other theory.

The second argument is from man's *nature*. For he, as we saw in the last chapter, is a compound being, consisting of a free and partly supernatural spirit, which controls his body and mind. And what becomes of this spirit at death? We know what becomes of the body: the component molecules are rearranged in other groups, and the natural forces are transformed into other natural forces. Nothing is lost or annihilated. But what becomes of the spirit? If this is a free supernatural force, the idea that it should perish altogether when the accompanying natural forces are rearranged at death is most



unlikely. The whole theory of the Conservation of Energy is opposed to such a view. And if it does not perish at death, it is extremely unlikely that it will do so subsequently ; so that this argument favours, not only a future life, but an immortal one.

And it should be noticed that a man's spirit, unlike his body, does not seem to have any component parts into which it can be split up ; and therefore, if it survives at all, it must survive as it is. In short, we are led to believe in an individual or personal immortality, though of course man's spirit in the future life may or may not have corresponding organs of body and mind under its control. This is, anyhow, a probable conjecture ; it cannot be pressed further, for the question at once arises, How did man's spirit originate ?

The third argument is from man's *capabilities*. For he does not seem adapted for this life only, and has aspirations and longings far beyond it. His powers seem capable of continual and almost endless development. Nearly all men wish for immortality. This life does not seem to satisfy them entirely. For instance, men, especially scientific men, have a longing after knowledge which can never be fully realised in this world. A man's capacities are thus out of all proportion to his destiny, if this life is all ; and to many it seems improbable that the Creator should have endowed men with such needless and useless capacities.

And this is strongly confirmed by the analogy of nature. For example, a bird in an egg shows rudimentary organs which cannot be exercised so long as it remains in the egg ; and this of itself is a proof that it is intended some day to leave the egg. On the other hand, a full-grown bird seems, as far as we can judge, to be entirely adapted to its present state, and not to have any longing after or capacity for any higher state ; and therefore we may infer that no higher state is intended for it. And by the same reasoning we may infer that some higher state is intended for man, for his mental and spiritual nature are not entirely satisfied by his present bodily life. In short, all animals seem made for this world only, and man is the one unsatisfied being in the universe.

Moreover, the period of preparation in a man's life seems

out of all proportion to the time prepared for, if death ends all. The development in a man's moral character often continues till nearly the close of his life. His character has then reached maturity. But for what is it matured? Surely not for speedy annihilation. Must not the wise Creator, Who designed everything else in the universe with such marvellous skill, have intended something better for His noblest creature than mere boundless capabilities, unsatisfied longings, and a lifelong preparation all for nothing?

The fourth argument is from man's *belief* in immortality. For such a belief has existed among men in all ages and countries, learned and ignorant, civilised and uncivilised; and how are we to account for it? It cannot have arisen from experience; and the attempts to explain it as due to the desire which men have for immortality, or to some one occasionally dreaming that he sees a departed friend, are quite inadequate. Desire is not conviction, and dreams are notoriously untrustworthy. They might account for an individual here and there entertaining this belief, but not for mankind always and everywhere doing so.

The belief, then, seems intuitive and an inherent part of human nature; though, like other intuitive beliefs, such as that of right and wrong, it is more fully developed in some nations than in others, and may sometimes be absent altogether. What, however, makes it almost certain that it is intuitive is, that nothing but such a belief could have been strong enough to withstand the apparent contradiction afforded by every grave. And it may be added, this belief has been one of the most powerful forces in the history of mankind. It has saturated the literature of all nations and countries, it has been the mainstay of nearly all religions, and it has probably exercised a greater influence on men's lives than anything else. And we may ask, is it likely that the Creator should have implanted such a strange belief in man if it were erroneous?

These, then, are the four great arguments in favour of a future life; and, with the possible exception of the second, none of them apply to animals; so the common objection, that if man is immortal, animals must be so too, is quite untenable.

On the other hand, the great argument *against* man's immortality is that his spirit seems to be inseparably connected with his body. As far as we can judge, it is born with the body, it certainly develops and matures with the body, and in most cases it seems to gradually decay with the body, and therefore it is inferred the two perish together.

But this does not follow. The body may be merely the instrument of the spirit, by which it manifests itself in the outer world; and hence, if the instrument gets out of order, its manifestations will become correspondingly confused, but yet without implying that the spirit itself is so. In the same way, if we shut up a clerk in a telegraph office, as soon as his instruments get out of order, the messages he sends, which are his only means of communication with the outer world, would become confused, and finally cease, but without implying that there was anything wrong with the clerk himself. And this is confirmed by the fact that instances are known in which a man's intellect and will have remained quite vigorous all through a mortal sickness, and up to the very moment of death; so that the gradual decay of the body does not necessarily involve that of the mind and spirit. Moreover, nature warns us not to judge by appearances, even in this very question of life and death. Who would have thought, apart from experience, that a butterfly would ever come out of a chrysalis, or that plants and trees, after being apparently dead all through the winter, would blossom again in the spring?

On the whole, then, the idea of a future life is certainly not improbable, and, as before said, it removes the chief difficulty in regard to evil in this world. For, to put it shortly, man is a free and responsible being, able to act right or wrong, and therefore deserving of reward or punishment. And yet in this life he does not seem to be equitably dealt with. Good men often suffer unjustly, wicked men are often prosperous; and a future state, and a future state alone, can remove this difficulty.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

Our conclusion, then, in regard to the *Existence of Evil* is this. It is undeniable that God must have foreknown all the

evil in the world, both physical and moral, when He originated it; and in this sense He designed it. But He may also have foreknown, what we can only *foreguess*, that the existence of this evil is but temporary, and that it will lead to a more than compensating permanent good, which could not be otherwise obtained. God, it must be remembered, has eternity to work in, and His plan embraces the whole universe; so that it is not surprising that, with our finite knowledge, we do not altogether understand it. Suffice it to say, that we do understand it to some extent. We perceive that the evils in this world 'need not be *ends*, but may be only *means* to ends;' and, for all we know, they may be the very best means for obtaining the very best ends. Indeed, as before said, they seem to be not only the best, but the only possible means for developing all that is highest and noblest in man. We conclude, then, that though God designed both the evil and the good in the world, He need not have desired both; and there are indications in nature sufficient to show that the good is what He desired, and the evil is only the inevitable companion.

The conclusion is often expressed by saying that *goodness* is an attribute of the Deity; and the term may certainly be admitted. For though it is doubtless a very inadequate one, and does not fully express the reality, it is immeasurably nearer the truth than *badness*, or even *indifference* would be. And in corroboration of this it may be mentioned, that it is the universal consent of all mankind who believe in a Supreme God to ascribe goodness to Him. The human mind seems to feel intuitively that such a Being must be good.

While, however, admitting the term goodness, it is most important to notice the sense in which it is used, and in which alone it is true. By God's goodness, or by His taking an interest in man's welfare, is not meant a mere universal beneficence, or wishing to make every one as happy as possible, irrespective of his conduct. The existence of evil seems fatal to such a theory as this. But rather God wishes to promote man's welfare in the truest and best way, not by gratifying every passing fancy, but by training and developing his

character, so that he may be capable of enjoying the highest forms of happiness. God's character is thus not merely *beneficent*, but *righteous* also. And He therefore wishes man to be not only happy, but righteous also. And He therefore of necessity gives him free will, with the option of being unrighteous, and consequently unhappy. So that this view of God's character, combining beneficence with righteousness, not only accounts for the marks of beneficent design all through nature, but also for the existence of evil, especially moral evil, and seems the only way of reconciling these phenomena. In short, beneficence and righteousness are both good, and the goodness of God includes both.

Now if we admit that goodness is an attribute of the Deity, the analogy from God's other attributes would show that He possesses it in its highest perfection; so that God is a Being not only of infinite *Power* and *Wisdom*, but also of perfect *Goodness*—the word 'perfect' being obviously more applicable to a moral quality like goodness than 'infinite' would be. And it will be noticed that these three great attributes of the Deity correspond to the three chief Theistic arguments. The first, that from causation, proves the existence of an All-Powerful Creator; the second, that from design, proves that He is All-Wise; and the third, that from human consciousness, proves that He is All-Good. They also correspond to some extent to the three aspects under which we considered man's character in the last chapter; so we arrive at the grand conclusion that God is physically *All-Powerful*, mentally *All-Wise*, and morally *All-Good*.

## CHAPTER VII

### THAT THEREFORE GOD MIGHT MAKE SOME REVELATION TO MAN

(A.) ITS POSSIBILITY.

Alleged difficulty in knowledge passing from the Infinite Mind to a finite mind.

(B.) ITS PROBABILITY.

(1.) From God's character. (2.) From man's character; since mentally he can understand it, and morally he can profit by it; while he also desires it, and his unique position makes him not altogether unworthy of it. (3.) From human analogy.

(C.) VARIOUS OBJECTIONS.

A revelation is said to be inappropriate, as God works by gradual development; needless, as conscience is a sufficient guide; unjust, as only given to certain men; and anyhow incredible unless quite convincing. None of these objections can be maintained; so a revelation is certainly credible, and perhaps slightly probable.

WE decided in the last two chapters that man is a free and responsible being, and that God takes an interest in his welfare. We now come to the subject of a *revelation*, which we will define as any superhuman knowledge directly imparted by God to man. And by *superhuman* knowledge is meant any knowledge which man could not otherwise obtain; such, for instance, as God's object in creating him, His wishes in regard to his conduct, or any past or future events of which he would otherwise be ignorant. And we will consider first the possibility, and then the probability, of a revelation. This is, of course, from antecedent reasons only, as no particular revelation which is alleged to have been given is at present under discussion.

## (A.) THE POSSIBILITY OF A REVELATION.

Now, since God foreknew the whole history of the universe when He originated it, He plainly possesses superhuman knowledge; and since He is omnipotent, He can impart this knowledge to others, for this does not involve any impossibility. So that if there is any difficulty in knowledge passing from the Infinite Mind to a finite mind, as it is sometimes expressed, the difficulty must lie, not with the Former, but with the latter. It may be said that though God can give a revelation, man is incapable of receiving it as such, since he can never know for certain whether any ideas which come to him really come from God or not. But even if so, it does not destroy the evidence for a revelation; for the knowledge itself may be of such a kind as to prove its superhuman origin (*e.g.*, predictions).

Moreover, the fact itself is disputed. No doubt strict analysis seems to support it; for the knowledge must be given either direct to our minds or through the organs of sense, and in neither case can we know for certain what caused the idea or the sensation. But this proves equally well that we can never be certain of receiving knowledge from another man. And yet we know from experience that, as a rule, if a man tells us anything, we are able somehow or other to know that the knowledge comes from him and not from any one else; and if we are in doubt, he can usually convince us. If, then, man can impart knowledge, with the certainty whence it comes, to another man, still more can God; for to deny this would be to make the power of the Creator inferior in this respect to that of the beings whom He has created.

Of course, it may be urged that man can only do this through his possessing a material body, and that therefore God, Who is spiritual, cannot do so. But for all we know there may be other means of imparting knowledge equally convincing. Indeed, to say that one mind cannot influence another without the intervention of a material body is on the face of it most unlikely. Of course, we individually, never having received a revelation from God, do not know what it would be like, just as a man who had always been deaf would not

know what hearing was like. But to those who receive the revelation in the one case, it may be just as convincing as to those who hear in the other.

And though the action of the Divine Spirit on the human mind is a *mystery*, it is not nearly so mysterious as the action of spirit on matter. And yet we have been forced to admit that the Divine Spirit acted on matter in originating the universe, and that man's spirit or will acts on matter every day. Moreover, considering that God has Himself, directly or indirectly, given us our minds, it seems unreasonable to say that He cannot communicate with them.

We therefore conclude that it is not only possible, but almost certain, that, if God chose, He could impart superhuman knowledge to a man, and could also convince him that the knowledge came from Himself, and not from any other source. Or, to otherwise express it, though God is to some extent unknowable and out of man's reach, we feel sure that man is not out of God's reach, so that a revelation is certainly possible.

(B.) THE PROBABILITY OF A REVELATION.

We pass on now to the probability of a revelation. And from whatever point of view we regard it, a revelation appears to be antecedently *credible*, and even *probable*. For God is a Being who seems likely to give a revelation; man is a being pre-eminently suited to receive one; and the best analogy we can obtain is strongly in favour of one being given. We will therefore consider these points in turn, and then the various objections to a revelation.

(1.) *The argument from God's Character.*—Now since God takes an interest in man's welfare, we may infer that, if a revelation were beneficial to man, as it probably would be, it would be in harmony with God's character to confer it. For a *beneficent* God must be willing to make a revelation, just as an omnipotent One must be able to do so. Of course, it may be objected that the same argument would apply to animals, since God seems to take an interest in their welfare also. And undoubtedly it would, but for the fact that animals, as far as we know, could neither understand nor profit by a



revelation, which would therefore not be beneficial to them ; and this prevents any possible analogy between the two cases. And when we add to this the fact that God is not only beneficent but *righteous*, and apparently wishes to train and develop man's character so that he may be righteous also, and perhaps with the idea of his living in some future state for which this life is a preparation, then a revelation cannot be thought to be even improbable.

(2.) *The argument from man's character.*—Passing on now to man's character, it must be noticed that he has been given a nature exactly fitted to receive a revelation. This can scarcely be disputed, for religion of some kind is, and always has been, practically universal ; and all important religions have rested on real or pretended revelations from God, and have been accepted in consequence. Thus man's nature has everywhere led him to seek for, demand, and, if need be, imagine a revelation from God. Nor is this surprising when we examine his nature in detail.

For, in the first place, it is undisputed that man's mental character would enable him to *understand* and appreciate a revelation if one were given him, while his moral character would enable him to *profit* by it. For man is not a mere machine ; he possesses a known freedom of action. And therefore, if God tells him what He wishes him to do, man can, if he chooses, do it. In short, a revelation would enable man both to know God's Will, and hence, if he chose, to do it. And since, as already shown, God seems to value man's conduct, a revelation which would influence him to act right, and yet without forcing him, and thereby destroying his freedom, is certainly not improbable. Of course, we cannot explain why God should value man's freely choosing to act right, unless, as said before, He has somewhat similar feelings to our own. Most men, for example, would prefer the willing obedience of their children, and that they should freely act right, with, of course, the chance of their acting wrong, rather than that they should be mere machines without free will. But, to carry on the analogy, a parent would do all he could to influence them to act right.

But more than this, not only can man understand and profit by a revelation, but both mentally and morally he *desires* it. A thoughtful man cannot help wishing to know why he is placed in this world; why he is given free will; how he is meant to use his freedom; and what future, if any, is in store for him hereafter: in short, what was God's object in creating him. It seems of all knowledge to be the highest, the noblest, the most worth knowing. And though human reasoning can give us some slight information about God, such as we have already considered, it can never teach us this.

Now this result of man's mental and moral nature was not only brought about by God, but must have been foreknown, designed, and intended by Him; and therefore it is not improbable that He should satisfy this craving of His own creating. Nor is the force of the argument weakened by the fact that God has also bestowed on man a craving after scientific knowledge, and yet does not intervene to satisfy it; since He has placed the means of satisfying this craving within man's own reach, whereas the knowledge alleged to be given by revelation is by hypothesis superhuman. And it may be added, the more we feel that God is *unknowable*—that is, that we can gain no satisfactory knowledge about Him by human science and reasoning—so much the more likely is it that He should give us such knowledge by revelation.

And all this is still further strengthened when we consider man's *unique position* on this earth; more especially when we regard him as the last and noblest result of the vast scheme of evolution which has been in progress for so many thousands of years. For such a vast scheme, like everything else, requires a motive as well as a cause. And just as the consideration of its *cause* in the widest sense leads us to natural religion or Theism, so the consideration of its *motive* in the widest sense prepares us for revealed religion.

For however much evolution can explain, it cannot explain itself. Why should there have been any evolution at all? Why should a universe of dead matter have ever produced life? There must have been some motive in all this; and

what adequate motive can be suggested? We can only look for an answer in *man*, who seems to be not only the highest product of the universe, but also a partly supernatural being, who, if not capable of supplying an adequate motive, is at all events less incapable of doing so than any other being we know of. For he has a spiritual part, which may be able to some extent to hold intercourse with his Creator, and which may also be immortal; so here is at least the possibility of a satisfactory answer. And if we admit that the creation of man is the chief object the Creator had in view for so many thousands of years, it does not seem unlikely that He might wish to hold some communication with him. Or, to put it shortly, the whole of nature, as we have seen, evidences design or purpose; and man, as we have seen, occupies a special and unique place in nature. Therefore, presumably God has some special purpose in regard to man, and, for all we know, may have something special to tell him about it.

On the whole, then, we conclude that man's mental and moral character, and the unique position he occupies on this earth, is a strong argument in favour of his receiving some revelation from God.

(3.) *The argument from human analogy.*—And this is strongly confirmed by human analogy, which is obviously the most appropriate, since, as we have shown, man to some extent resembles God. Like Him, he is a personal and moral being, and, as far as we know, the only other being in the universe who is either personal or moral, so that he may be appropriately called a *child* of God. Moreover, God seems to care for his welfare, just as an earthly father would care for the welfare of his children. What, then, would analogy teach us on this subject?

Suppose a father in England had children living a hard and difficult life in Australia, who had never seen their father and knew little about him, but about whose welfare he cared a great deal. Is it not probable that he would send them some *message*, telling them, for instance, why he had placed them in Australia; what he wanted them to do there; how they were to face the difficulties of life; and possibly whether

he ever intended bringing them home? The analogy is, of course, imperfect; but this only strengthens the argument. For, to complete it, we must assume, among other things, that placing his children in Australia was entirely the father's doing; that he not only cared for their welfare, but had already benefited them in many ways; that he knew all about his children, including their wish for some message from their father, and to know why they were placed in Australia; that he had himself given them these wishes, but without any means of satisfying them; and lastly, that he could send them the message without the least difficulty, delay, expense, or uncertainty. Under these circumstances it can hardly be denied that the argument from human analogy is strongly in favour of God's making some revelation to man.

(C.) OBJECTIONS TO A REVELATION.

But now to consider the other side. The four chief objections to a revelation are, that it would be inappropriate in regard to God; needless in regard to the men to whom it is given; unjust towards other men; and in any case incredible unless quite convincing. We will consider each in turn.

In the first place, it is said that a revelation would be *inappropriate*, since it would not harmonise with God's method of promoting human welfare, which is always by slow and gradual development under fixed laws, and not by sudden interference. But the force of this objection is almost gone when we remember that man is a partly supernatural being, not under fixed laws. And that God having created such a being, in this respect so like Himself, should occasionally hold some direct communication with him, does not seem very improbable. Moreover, the revelation itself might be given to the human race not suddenly and all at once, but slowly and successively, individual men being selected to receive it and to make it known in different ages. It might thus be a gradual revealing of God's will to mankind, corresponding to his gradually increasing needs and capacities. And the whole analogy of nature is strongly in favour of its being so. For the universe itself, mankind, his language, his civilisation,

all seem to have been brought about by the slow process of evolution. So we should expect a revelation, if one were given at all, to be on the same principle.

The second objection is, that a revelation would be *needless*, since its only use would be as a guide to man in his conduct; and it is urged God has already given every man such a guide in his conscience. The answer to this is, of course, that conscience is not a sufficient guide. It is true man's moral sense always tells him that there is a right and a wrong kind of action; but his conscience does not always tell him correctly which is right and which is wrong, and therefore men's consciences lead them to diametrically opposite acts, all of which cannot be pleasing to God. Moreover, the superhuman knowledge alleged to be given by revelation might, as before said, greatly influence man to choose right; and, as a matter of fact, such knowledge, real or pretended, has had precisely this effect on millions of men. This objection, then, must be put aside. Indeed, it rather tells the other way; for if we admit that conscience in any way represents the Divine Will to man, it immensely strengthens the argument that God cares about man's conduct, and hence the probability of His giving him some revelation.

The next objection is on the ground of *injustice*. It is said that any revelation would imply a partiality to the men or nation to whom it was given, and would therefore be unjust to the rest of mankind. But this is altogether unsound, for God's other benefits are not bestowed impartially. On the contrary, pleasure and pain, good and evil, are never equally distributed in this world. Partiality and apparent favouritism is the rule throughout, and this without any seeming merit or demerit on the part of the men concerned. Moreover, the advantages of a revelation may not concern this world only; and all who believe in a future life are convinced of God's equity, and that men will only be judged according to the knowledge of God's Will which they possessed, or might have possessed had they chosen, and not according to any higher standard which was out of their reach.

The last and only important objection is, that if God gave a

revelation at all, it would be absolutely *convincing*. Everything that God does He does well ; and we cannot, it is urged, imagine His making a revelation to man, and yet doing it so imperfectly as to leave men in doubt as to whether He had done it or not. For this would be an insufficient revelation, and would imply that God either could not, or would not, make its evidence sufficient to ensure conviction, neither of which is credible. And this objection is strengthened by human analogy. For we cannot imagine a wise parent sending a message to his children, and yet doing it so imperfectly that many of them doubted whether the message really came from him.

Now, though all this seems very probable, a moment's reflection will show that it is not conclusive ; for exactly the same may be said in regard to Natural Theology. Is it likely, for instance, that God should create free and responsible men, and yet give them such insufficient evidence about it, that while many are fully convinced, others deny not only their own freedom and responsibility, but the very existence of the God Who made them ? And yet He has done so. And therefore there is nothing improbable in the evidence for a revelation, if one were given, being of a similar character. Doubtless God has some good reason in each case for wishing the evidence to be of such a kind that man may accept or reject it. And there is much to be said in favour of this view, since in all other matters man is left a free choice. He is often able to find out how he ought to think and how he ought to act, but he is not forced to do either. And God may have wished that the same rule should be followed in regard to a revelation, and that man should be left free to believe it or not, just as he is left free to act on it or not if he does believe it, and just as he is left free to choose right or wrong in other cases.

Of course, it is not denied that the persons to whom the revelation was given would be convinced of its truth. The question is whether the evidence would be sufficient to convince every one else ; and, as we have seen, it certainly need not be. And therefore we cannot say that no revelation can

come from God unless the evidence for it be overwhelming. Moreover, however strong it might be, some men would probably reject it, as demonstrative evidence on such a subject is of course impossible. All we can say is, that the evidence would probably be sufficient to convince a man if he took the trouble to examine it carefully; only it need not be such as to compel conviction. What kind of evidence we may expect will be considered in the next chapter.

None of these objections, then, can be maintained, and we are forced back to the conclusion that a revelation seems for several reasons slightly probable. To put it shortly, if God is good and really cares for man's welfare, it seems unlikely that He should withhold from him that knowledge 'which is the noblest, the most useful, and the most longed after;—the knowledge of Himself.' While, if man is really a free and partly supernatural being occupying a unique position in the world, it seems unlikely that he should be told nothing, and therefore know nothing, as to why he was created or what is his future destiny. Thus when we consider both God's Character and man's character, it is certainly *credible*, and perhaps slightly *probable*, that God should make some revelation to man, telling him how he ought to use his freedom in this world, and possibly what future is in store for him hereafter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THAT THEREFORE A MIRACULOUS REVELATION IS CREDIBLE

A Divine messenger would probably have credentials.

(A.) SUPERHUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

This knowledge may refer to the past, present, or future (i.e., prophecy).

(B.) SUPERHUMAN EVENTS, or Designed Coincidences.

There is nothing incredible here.

(C.) SUPERNATURAL EVENTS, or Evidential Miracles.

These defined to be "marvels specially brought about by God for the purpose of attesting a revelation." This definition is threefold, referring to their outward aspect, cause, and purpose; each of which may be considered separately:—

(a.) As *Marvels*: though different from experience, they are not contrary to experience; for we have no experience of the proper kind to refer to.

(b.) As *Special Works of God*: they only interfere with the uniformity of nature in the same way that human works interfere with it.

(c.) And as *Signs*: there is nothing to show that they are inconsistent with God's Character. Conclusion.

We decided in the last chapter that it was credible, and perhaps slightly probable, that God might make some *revelation* to man, that is to say, to certain men, for them to make known to others. Now, it would obviously be desirable that these men should have some means of showing that the knowledge had really come from God, and not from themselves. It is not meant that this accompanying evidence is in any way necessary to the revelation, but merely that it is somewhat probable. In other words, if God sends a message to man, it is somewhat probable that the messenger would have *credentials*.

And the human analogy, before considered, of a father in England with children in Australia, strongly confirms this.



For it would be most unlikely for their father to send them a messenger, and yet give him no means of proving that he was not an impostor, more especially if the father knew that there were many impostors in Australia, who professed to give his children messages from himself, and misled them in consequence. So in the case before us. As a matter of fact, men have often appeared in the world's history who professed to have a revelation from God, and have misled mankind in consequence. Is it not probable, then, that if God really did give a revelation, He should take care that His true messengers should have credentials which would distinguish them from the impostors ?

These credentials, then, must obviously be such as could not be forged by man, and must therefore of necessity be *superhuman*, if not *supernatural*. So we may divide them into these two classes ; the former including superhuman knowledge capable of being afterwards verified, and superhuman coincidences ; and the latter evidential miracles in the strict sense. For convenience, we will call all these events *miraculous signs*. A miraculous revelation, then, is one attested by miraculous signs ; and we must now examine whether such signs are credible.

(A.) SUPERHUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

To begin with, the knowledge which any one alleged that he had received from God, though of course superhuman at the time, might be capable of being afterwards verified, and, if found correct, it would tend to prove the reality of the revelation. It does not follow that the knowledge itself need refer to future events, though, if it did not, there would be a great probability of his having derived it from human sources. If it did, it would become a *prophecy*, and this cause of uncertainty would disappear ; though we might still doubt whether it was not due to human foresight, or whether the coincidence was not, as we should say, *accidental*.

Now, the credibility of this class of miraculous signs must be at once admitted, provided we admit a revelation at all. For the knowledge is in each case superhuman, and only differs in the fact of being afterwards verified. The only possible objection refers to prophecies regarding human

conduct. These, it may be said, are incredible, since they would interfere with man's freedom. But this is only part of the more general objection that any foreknowledge on God's part would interfere with man's freedom, which has been already considered in Chap. iii. And there is no special difficulty in regard to prophecies, since, if God's foreknowing how a man will act is consistent with his freedom, God's imparting that knowledge by revelation to some one else is equally so. In either case, as said before, God merely foreknows the use man will make of his freedom.

(B.) SUPERHUMAN EVENTS, OR DESIGNED COINCIDENCES.

By this is meant that certain human acts or sayings might be attested by natural phenomena coinciding with them in a remarkable manner. For example, suppose a prophet claimed to have a revelation from God, and, as a proof of this, invited the people to witness a sacrifice on a cloudless day. He then killed an animal, and placed it on an altar of stones, but put no fire under it, and even threw water over it. Suddenly, however, a heavy thunderstorm arose, and the sacrifice was struck by lightning. Now the thunderstorm might have arisen and the lightning might have struck on that particular spot, in strict accordance with natural laws; and yet the *coincidence* of this occurring just when and where the prophet wanted it, would tend strongly to show that God, Who must have foreknown and designed the coincidence, meant to corroborate what the prophet said. Or, to put the argument in other words, the lightning would seem to have struck the sacrifice on purpose; and therefore such events have been popularly described as *natural forces acting rationally*. Of course, as a rule, the forces of nature do not act rationally. A falling meteorite, for instance, does not go a yard out of its way to kill any one or to spare him. Man, on the other hand, does act rationally. His acts are directed for a purpose, and thus evidence design. And, with the events we are considering, the forces of nature seem also to act with a purpose, and this raises a strong presumption that the Author of these forces was really acting with this purpose. In short, the events seem to have been *Designed Coincidences*.

Having now explained what is meant by superhuman events, there is no difficulty as to their credibility, for they are by hypothesis part of the ordinary course of nature. And God might have arranged at the origin of the universe, or subsequently, so as to bring about the events just when and where He wanted them to attest any human acts or sayings, the foreknowledge of which He also possessed. Of course, the value of such coincidences varies greatly according to whether the event is of a usual or unusual character. In the latter case, more especially if the event is very unusual or the coincidence very striking, they are popularly called miracles. And they may have considerable value, though there is always a slight chance of the agreement being, as we might say, accidental.

(C.) SUPERNATURAL EVENTS, OR EVIDENTIAL MIRACLES.

As this subject is rather a complicated one, we must examine it at some length, and it will be well to start with a definition. Now by an *evidential miracle* is meant a *marvel specially brought about by God for the purpose of attesting a revelation*. This definition has, of course, been framed to suit the miracles recorded in the Bible, which we shall have to examine later on, and it is really threefold. In the first place, an evidential miracle is described as to its mere *outward aspect*. It is a marvel—that is to say, it is an unusual and extraordinary phenomenon, which we cannot account for, and which thus attracts attention. Secondly, it is described as to its *cause*. This marvel is said to have had a special cause, to have been specially brought about by God—that is to say, by some action on His part different from His ordinary action in maintaining the universe. While, lastly, it is described as to its *purpose*. A marvel specially brought about by God is only an evidential miracle when it is brought about for the purpose of attesting a revelation.

Having now defined what is meant by evidential miracles, we have next to examine their credibility. And in doing this, we must of course consider the whole definition, that is to say, the three aspects of the event; otherwise we shall not be discussing evidential miracles at all, but only events which in some respects resemble them. And it may be added, these

three aspects are not chosen arbitrarily ; other events can and ought to be looked at from the same points of view, which are merely what we may call their physical, mental, and moral aspects. And to show the great importance of thus examining anything, not merely as a phenomenon, but with reference to its alleged cause and purpose, we will take an event from recent history, and select Warrington's example of the *Mont Cenis Tunnel*.

Suppose, then, that any one heard of this as a *phenomenon* only, the agency and purpose being left out of account. Suppose, that is, he heard that a hollow straight cavity, of uniform size, and over seven miles long, had been formed underneath a range of mountains, and that it had begun as two cavities, one from each end, which, after years of growth, had exactly met in the middle. He would at once pronounce the event incredible, for the cavity presents features utterly unlike all natural cavities.

But now suppose the next point of *causation* to be introduced. This cavity through the Alps is alleged to be something more than a natural phenomenon. It is asserted to have a special cause—to be the work of man. All previous difficulties would now vanish ; for though the work is an arduous one, it is well within the powers of man to accomplish. But fresh difficulties arise. For numbers of men must have laboured together for years to excavate such a cavity ; and, from what we know of human nature, men will only thus combine for profitable ends, such as commerce and manufacture, and not for boring holes through mountains. And therefore the event, though possible with the alleged agency, is still practically incredible, as the assumed action on man's part is inconsistent with human nature.

But now suppose the last point of *purpose* to be introduced. It is alleged that this is not a mere useless hole bored through a mountain, but a hole bored for a particular purpose ; it is, in fact, a railway tunnel. And suppose the advantages of such a tunnel at such a place to be pointed out, then all difficulties as to its credibility would disappear. Of course, whether such an event actually took place must be decided by the

evidence for and against it ; but when we consider the agency by which, and the purpose for which, it is alleged to have been wrought, there is certainly nothing incredible about it.

Now a similar method must be adopted with regard to evidential miracles. They must not be examined simply as *marvels*, but as marvels alleged to have been brought about by an adequate cause, and for a sufficient purpose. In other words, they must also be considered as *special works* of God, and as *signs* of a revelation. And it is just these added elements which may make the marvels credible. And each is almost equally important ; for a miracle without a sufficient purpose would be morally incredible, just as one without a sufficient cause would be mentally so. We now proceed to this detailed examination.

(a.) *Miracles as marvels.*

The first aspect of evidential miracles is that of marvels or extraordinary phenomena. As such, they are events different from, and apparently contrary to, experience. - And by experience is meant not only a man's own prior experience, but also his acquaintance with the experience of others, as far as he thinks it reliable ; excluding, of course, that referring to the particular events under discussion. Now how does this aspect of evidential miracles affect their credibility ?

To begin with, the fact of their being *different from* experience does not even make them improbable. For experience itself is only acquired gradually, and every addition to it must necessarily consist of something different from prior experience ; so that to reject all phenomena different from experience would be to destroy experience altogether. Nor is the case altered however great may be the experience from which the alleged event differs, or however great may be the difference. For many scientific discoveries, such as the liquefaction of hydrogen, have differed from an experience which up till then was universal. It is clear, then, that phenomena different from experience are not therefore incredible, or even improbable. The only result of this difference is to make us examine the evidence for them more carefully.

But evidential miracles appear to be not only different from,

but *contrary to experience*. By this it is not of course meant that we have experience of the alleged marvels themselves, which contradicts their marvellous character, but that we have experience of apparently similar phenomena, which leads us to expect that the occurrence would have been contrary to what is alleged. Suppose, for instance, it were stated that on one occasion the water of a certain river was held back in its course, so that there was a dry passage across, over which persons walked. Now, mankind have had much experience of rivers, and, as far as we know, with one or two alleged exceptions, that experience is in favour of rivers always flowing steadily on, and not at times standing still and leaving a dry passage across.

Such a marvel, then, would be contrary to experience, and that the event would be therefore improbable is obvious. What we have to discuss is whether this improbability is sufficient in all cases to make the event incredible, no matter what testimony there may be in its favour. Hume's argument that it is sufficient is well known. He says that we can only judge of the probability of anything, whether it be the occurrence of an event or the truthfulness of the narrator, by *experience*; and that as it is contrary to experience for miracles to be true, but not contrary to experience for testimony to be false, the balance of probability must always be against the miracle.

There is undoubtedly a slight flaw in this argument, for the greater part of the experience to which any one appeals, as opposed to miracles, is itself derived from the testimony of others. Few persons, for example, have had sufficient personal experience, say, of attempting to raise the dead to know whether it would be contrary to experience or not. Thus the real balance of probability is between the testimony in favour of the miracle, and a presumption against it arising partly from one's own experience, but chiefly from the testimony of others. With this correction, Hume's argument appears to be thoroughly sound, that there is always a slight probability against the miracle.

But of course, if true, this reasoning must apply equally to

all alleged events which are contrary to a man's prior experience. Are these, then, as a matter of fact, incredible? There can be but one answer to this question. Such events are not only credible, but have occurred by the thousand. Let us take a couple of examples. Few persons can have had so much experience as to the time that a man can stay under water without being drowned as the Eastern pearl-fishers. Suppose, then, that they heard for the first time that a man was able to stay under water for hours, moving about at the bottom, and at the end coming up alive, and not even exhausted. They would at once declare it to be utterly contrary to experience; but ought they to add that it was therefore incredible? Again, all mankind have had some experience as to how far it is possible to hear the human voice distinctly, and up to within a few years this has invariably fixed the limit at a few hundred yards at most. Now, suppose any one was told for the first time that it was possible to speak right across England, he would justly say that it was utterly contrary to experience; but, as before, ought he to add that it was therefore incredible?

Of course, in these examples the events have been viewed simply as marvels, and without reference to their cause. And the question is not whether they would be credible to us now with our experience, but whether they were credible when first announced. And the fact of their being now not only credible but true shows that they must really have been credible then, and that the persons were wrong if they thought them incredible, though they were entirely contrary to their entire experience.

From this it is clear that, however contrary to experience an alleged marvel may be, it is not on that account incredible; and therefore, as Hume's argument appears to be sound in itself, it must be irrelevant. And on examination it is easily seen to be so. For the argument views the event only as a marvel, and *without reference to its alleged cause*. But we have no right to leave this out of account, nor do we in practice. When any one first hears of a marvel, he does not merely compare it with his previous experience, strike a

balance of probabilities, and thereupon base his final conclusion ; in which case, as Hume supposes, it might be always against the marvel ; but he first inquires how, and under what circumstances, this strange event is said to have been brought about. For if any cause is alleged to have been at work of the influence of which he knows nothing, then he has no experience of the required kind to appeal to. There is the testimony in favour of the event as before ; and if he disbelieves it, he does so, not because it is contrary to his experience, but because he thinks the supposed cause either did not exist, or would not have had the effect asserted.

A reference to the previous examples will make this quite plain. The pearl-fishers, when they first heard of the man staying under water for hours, would, if reasonable men, inquire as to the *cause* of this. They would then be told that the diver was provided with a pipe to the surface, through which he was supplied with air. Now, of the possibility or adequacy of such a contrivance they might doubt still ; but one thing would be quite clear, that this was a case to which their experience, however large, did not apply. The instant the pipe to the surface was mentioned, whether they believed it or not, that instant the phenomenon was taken out of the range of their experience altogether. And of course the same applies to the telephone across England.

This, then, is the explanation of Hume's argument. So long as a marvel, contrary to experience, is regarded only as a phenomenon, the probability must be always against its truth. But if we inquire as to the agency by which it was brought about, and find that some special cause is alleged, as to the influence of which we are ignorant, then the argument is no longer applicable. We have simply no experience of the required kind to appeal to. Of course, we may still disbelieve the event, by doubting either the existence or the adequacy of the supposed cause ; but the objection, as contrary to experience, is no longer tenable.

Now this is precisely the case with regard to evidential miracles. As marvels they seem contrary to experience ; but they claim to have a *special cause*, to be specially brought



about by God—that is to say, by some action on His part different from His usual action in maintaining the universe; and of the influence of this cause we have no experience whatever. We may, of course, as above, deny its existence or doubt its adequacy; but the argument, as contrary to experience, vanishes. It must not be thought from this that experience is of no value at all in deciding on an alleged marvel. It is of very great value, but only in forcing the asserter of the marvel to give some reason for its strangeness. But when once a cause is given, then the argument is no longer applicable, unless indeed we have experience of this cause itself.

On the whole, then, it is clear that the fact of evidential miracles seeming to be contrary to experience is no reason for disbelieving *them*, though it might be a reason for disbelieving other alleged marvels, because they claim to have a special cause wherewith to account for this special character.

We have now to examine whether this alleged cause really existed, and whether, if so, it was sufficient to produce the alleged effect—that is to say, we pass on to the second aspect of evidential miracles; our conclusion thus far being that they are credible as *marvels*, if it be credible that they were *especially brought about by God*.

(b.) *Miracles as special works of God.*

This is often thought to present great difficulties, as interfering with the *uniformity of nature*, discussed in Chap. ii. But it will be seen that God's assumed action would only interfere with it in the same manner that human action interferes with it. Neither of them violates the uniformity of nature, neither of them requires any action contrary to the laws of nature, though both are able to bring about results which nature of itself would not have brought about.

In the case of human works this is quite obvious. Take, for example, a railway engine. Every motion of its every part is undoubtedly due to natural causes, and is in strict accordance with natural laws, and thus far it resembles natural phenomena. But all will admit that it is a phenomenon out of nature's ordinary course, and one which nature,

left to itself, would never have produced. It required besides nature the action of *man's will*. And yet what a little did man's will do! It merely gave a certain direction to the force engaged in nervous action, which, in connection with other forces, enabled man to move his own limbs, and thus eventually to construct the steam-engine. There was no violation of natural laws anywhere. On the contrary, the result was brought about entirely in accordance with those laws, only under the directive influence of man's will. Indeed, if the laws of nature were not invariable, there would be an end of human inventions. It is because these laws are invariable, and because man knows to a great extent what they are, that he is thus able to carry out his designs. It is plain, then, that the action of man's will on matter, though extremely limited, can produce a vast number of marvels which nature of itself would not have produced, and yet without violating any of its laws.

Now evidential miracles, as regards their causation, claim to be similar phenomena, only brought about by the action of *God's Will* on matter; and from this their credibility under this head must be admitted. For God has the power of directly acting on matter, and to a much greater extent than man, and we have already decided that in originating the universe He used this power, so He might use it again if He thought fit. Indeed, the creation seems the greatest of all miracles, and of itself renders any other possible. Moreover, God's knowledge of the laws of nature is complete, whereas man's is only partial. Therefore, as man, with his limited power over nature and partial knowledge of its laws, can bring about results so totally out of nature's ordinary course, and yet without violating any of its laws; still more can God, Who has complete power over nature, and complete knowledge of its laws. For to deny this would be to deny to God the power which we concede to man.

And if it be objected that man can only do this through his having a material body, the answer is obvious. The action of the will on matter takes place in the brain, and man's body is only a natural link in the chain of cause and

effect, and so does not affect the analogy. No doubt we cannot imagine how the Deity can exert His Will over matter, but neither can we imagine how we can do it ourselves. The difficulty is as great in the one case as in the other.

From this it is clear that evidential miracles do not necessitate God's violating natural laws. In fact, they do not claim to have been brought about by any action on His part different in kind from how ordinary phenomena are brought about, for each is produced in conformity with natural laws, and each is due originally to the action of God's Will on matter. Only, in the one case there is an almost infinite number of intermediate natural links, and in the other comparatively few. And hence it follows that all events are in a certain sense both natural and supernatural. They are natural as regards the mode in which they are brought about, and supernatural as regards the original cause which brings them about. In short, as was shown in Chap. ii., the cause of the natural, if we go far enough back, is always supernatural.

Only one question now remains to be discussed under this head. It will be noticed that we have assumed in the above argument that evidential miracles are not actually contrary to the laws of nature, but are events brought about in accordance with those laws, such as the human examples are admitted to be. Now as no instances of evidential miracles are at present being examined, it would be premature to discuss whether they do or do not correspond to this character, but they certainly need not be contrary to the laws of nature. For *contrary to* does not mean an event which is merely inexplicable by those laws which are known to us; for if so, every scientific anomaly, such as the contraction of water between 0° and 4° C. would be contrary to the laws of nature. But it means an event in which some force that we do know, and which ought to have had a part in the phenomenon, either did not apparently act at all, or did not act according to its usual law. And it is clear that evidential miracles do not necessitate this, and in some instances disallow it.

Take, for example, the supposed case of a river standing still. This might be thought at first to involve a temporary cessation of the force of gravity; but when carefully examined, it will be seen from the narrative itself that this could not have been the cause of the phenomenon. For if so, both the water and the people would have been hurled off into space by the earth's centrifugal motion. What the narrative really implies is, that the force of gravity was acting precisely as usual, or how could persons walk across? but that there was also some other force acting on the water, which together with gravity produced a result which the latter alone would not have produced. Thus the water was kept back, not in the absence of, but in consequence of, some counteracting force. But there is nothing contrary to the laws of nature in this, any more than in the ascent of sap in trees, which is equally opposed to gravitation alone.

Many other scientific analogies have been suggested. Suppose, for instance, a clock with an iron pendulum is placed on a table and keeps perfect time. Suddenly, without any one touching it, it begins to gain rapidly, and then, after an hour or so, goes on as before. This need not imply any defect in the construction of the clock, still less any variation in the laws of motion or the force of gravity. It would be fully accounted for by some one holding a magnet under the table. Of course, in this and in other scientific cases we know the disturbing cause; but this very fact prevents us from saying that in a miracle, merely because we do not know it, the laws of nature must be violated.

It may be asked, in conclusion, whether any asserted phenomenon could be so contrary to known laws as to be *incredible*? And in the strict sense of the term it seems that it could not. Of course, theoretically it can be stated that the same substance, under the same conditions, and acted on by the same forces, will always behave in the same manner. But then, in practice, if we find it apparently does not, and the fact rests on sufficient evidence (*e.g.*, oxygen and ozone), we assume that in some way the conditions are not exactly the same; though our only ground for making this assump-

tion may be just that observed difference in the result which it is intended to explain. While, then, it is plain that no phenomenon as such could be pronounced incredible from its being contrary to natural laws, it is equally plain that the more it appears to be contrary to these laws so much the greater is its antecedent improbability, and so much the stronger evidence does it require. But this question does not concern us at present.

We conclude, therefore, that there is nothing incredible in the *causation* of evidential miracles, provided it is credible that God should wish to use His power over nature in the assumed manner. And this leads us to the third aspect of evidential miracles; for whether God would wish to act in a certain way depends of course on what *purpose* He had in doing so.

(c.) *Miracles as signs.*

Now, evidential miracles are defined as being brought about *for the purpose of attesting a revelation*; so that whatever importance may attach to any of them on other grounds, their chief value is asserted to be as *signs* of a revelation. How, then, does this affect their credibility? Now, we have already shown that it is credible, and perhaps slightly probable, that God might make a revelation to man. Therefore we have only to inquire whether evidential miracles are appropriate means for obtaining this end; since the importance of a revelation, if made at all, might justify and render probable what we should otherwise consider the most unlikely events, if they were suited to this special purpose.

And it is plain that evidential miracles are so suited, indeed they appear to be precisely such means as we should expect; for their extraordinary character in the physical world corresponds with that of revelation itself in the mental world, which has been called a kind of mental miracle. Anyhow, they appear to be the most suitable means. And it need hardly be added that, when considered as to their purpose, the uniformity of nature, so far from being an argument against miracles, is essential to their value, since, if nature were not uniform, there would be no proof that an alleged miracle, even if true, was supernatural.

It may still be objected that God's character, as indicated by nature, is *Unchangeable*; and that therefore it is most improbable that He would at times act in a special manner with regard to natural phenomena. In other words, it is probable that any events He wished to bring about, whether for the purpose of attesting a revelation or for any other reason, would have been produced by the ordinary methods of nature, thus being only superhuman coincidences. And the more nature is studied the stronger does this objection appear, since there are thousands of cases, such as storms and earthquakes, when it seems to us that a slight interference with the ordinary course of nature would be highly beneficial to man, and yet it never occurs. And it is still further strengthened when we consider the phenomena of design and evolution, since we find that God apparently obtained all the results He wanted by original adjustment among the forces of nature, and not by any subsequent interference. Or this objection may be otherwise expressed by saying that a miracle would reflect on either the wisdom or power of God, since, if All-wise, He would have foreseen the occasion, and if All-powerful, He would have provided for it; so that any subsequent interference with nature is something like having to remedy a fault.

This is no doubt the most serious objection to miracles, but it is by no means insuperable. In the first place, it rests to a great extent on our *ignorance*, or at most partial knowledge, of God's character. For had we only our own sense of the fitness of things to judge by, we should never have thought that God would have created such a world as ours at all. The existence of evil, and that innocent men should suffer for guilty ones, are phenomena we should have thought most unlikely; and yet they occur every day. If, then, we are incompetent to decide beforehand how God would be likely to govern the world in an ordinary manner, we must be still more incompetent to say whether, under special circumstances, He might not deviate from this manner. Moreover, the objection is directly opposed to the analogy of the only other personal being in the universe we know of, which is man

himself. A man may, as a rule, act uniformly, and yet on some special occasion, and for some special reason, he may, and often does, act differently; and there is nothing inconceivable in God's doing the same.

Secondly, in the case before us, it is even probable that He would do so, since the chief object sought to be obtained by evidential miracles could not have been obtained by the ordinary course of nature, though their immediate effects might have been. For example, instead of healing men miraculously, they might be healed naturally; but then there would be no evidence that the healer was sent by God, and was speaking in His name. In short, the messenger would be without *credentials*; and, as we have already shown, this seems unlikely. On the other hand, evidential miracles would both attract men's attention to the revelation and convince them of its superhuman character; and these are precisely the two points required.

Thirdly, though evidential miracles do not show God's unchangeableness in the same manner as the unchanging course of nature, they are not inconsistent with it. For they are not asserted to be *after-thoughts* with God, but to have been planned from the very beginning. And there is nothing incredible in this; for even if we assume that God cannot 'change His Will,' we have no reason for saying that He cannot 'will a change.' And if He foresaw that at certain periods in the world's history events would arise which, in order to carry out His purpose, could be best dealt with in some special manner, and therefore determined that when these events arose He would deviate from His usual way of working, this would involve no inconsistency on His part. His unusual action would be as much foreseen, and as much part of the one unalterable plan, as His usual action, only it would not show forth His unchangeableness to us in the same way.

But lastly, there may be some *other* attributes of God which evidential miracles show, and which the ordinary course of nature does not show; such as His condescension in giving them at all. One object of a revelation might be to convince man that God really cared for his happiness and valued his

affections. And there is nothing incredible in supposing that, to attest such a revelation as this, God might condescend to manifest Himself more after a human manner, and to act, not with the uniformity of nature, but more as a man would act, in order that man might the more readily understand Him. In the same way, in addressing foreigners, one would speak in their language, however inferior it might be to one's own.

We have now examined evidential miracles under their last aspect, and there is nothing to show that they are incredible. On the contrary, there is much to show that if God chose to give a revelation at all, they are precisely such *signs* as we might expect for attesting its truth.

In conclusion, we have only to sum up the previous argument. We have shown that evidential miracles are credible both as *marvels* and as *special works of God*, if it be credible that they were brought about *for the purpose of attesting a revelation*. And we have now shown that, on the supposition that God might make a revelation, which we have already admitted, there is nothing inconsistent with His character as far as we know it, and therefore nothing in the slightest degree incredible, in His using evidential miracles, as well as other miraculous signs, as a means of attesting its truth. On the whole, then, we conclude that a Miraculous Revelation is certainly *credible*. This, it will be remembered, indicates an event the antecedent probability against which does not seem to be above 99 to 1, and therefore means little more than open to argument. Whether such a revelation has ever been made will be discussed in the following chapters.



BOOK III  
*THE JEWISH RELIGION*

CHAPTER IX

THAT THE JEWISH RELIGION IS CREDIBLE

(A.) INTRODUCTION.

Objection that it is useless to continue the argument, since the ordinary reader cannot judge of the evidence in favour of the Jewish and Christian religions, because it is historical, and can only be understood by specialists; while many specialists have decided against it, so that the subject cannot be an important one. But this objection is quite untenable.

(B.) MEANING OF JEWISH RELIGION.

Its alleged partiality to the Jews.

(C.) THE JEWISH MIRACLES.

(a.) Superhuman Events. No difficulty here; many of the miracles belong to this class, such as the "silence" of the sun and moon, and the shadow on the dial.

(b.) Supernatural Events. The three aspects of evidential miracles are denoted by different names in the Old Testament; and the events themselves claim to have been (1) marvels, (2) specially brought about by God, and (3) signs to attest the revelation; and they are therefore credible. Conclusion.

(A.) INTRODUCTION.

We decided in the first four chapters of this essay on the existence of God, meaning by that word the Personal Being Who created and designed the universe, and in the next four that it was credible that He might make a miraculous revelation to man. Before passing on to consider the Jewish and

Christian religions, both of which claim to be such revelations, a preliminary objection of some importance has to be examined.

It arises from the fact that the arguments connected with these religions are to a great extent historical, and therefore of a totally different kind from those previously examined. Hitherto we have been dealing with arguments which are intelligible to any educated man, and from which he can draw his own conclusions. But the historical arguments about to be considered involve, it is said, a long and patient inquiry into the authenticity and truthfulness of various books of the Bible, so that none but specialists can appreciate their force. Hence it is urged that for the ordinary reader to attempt to grapple with evidence of this kind is mere waste of time. However plausible an argument might seem, a slight knowledge of Hebrew might show it to be unsound; while again the strongest arguments might have little weight with him, owing to his want of historical and philological training. Moreover, it is notorious that many experts, who have devoted their whole lives to the study of these books, have decided against their authenticity. While, lastly, it is urged that if these religions were really true, and were meant to be believed by all mankind, the evidence in their favour would be such that all mankind could understand and appreciate it—evidence, in short, similar to that for the existence of God and the freedom and responsibility of man. The above objection is really fourfold, and we will consider each point in turn.

Now, the fact that the evidence in favour of both the Jewish and Christian religions is chiefly *historical* must, of course, be admitted. But what else could it be? The evidence in favour of any revelation must necessarily be historical, and therefore liable to all the defects of such evidence in being written in dead languages. For the revelation, if true, is an event in history, and therefore can only be vouched for by the same kind of evidence as all other historical events. To expect, then, that the evidence in favour of the Jewish and Christian religions should be of the same kind as that in

favour of Natural Theology is most unreasonable. We might as well require that the evidence for the battle of Waterloo should be of the same kind as that for the law of gravitation. Each may be perfectly convincing, but they are necessarily of a different kind; so we may dismiss this part of the objection at once.

Secondly, it is urged that historical evidence can only be understood by *specialists*. But this is only partly true. No doubt a man who is a thorough scholar in Hebrew and Greek, which the present writer does not profess to be, and has spent years in studying the Bible, is best able to weigh the arguments for and against its authenticity. But, as will be seen later on, most of the arguments are of such a kind as can be readily understood by the ordinary reader. And even in other cases it is not, as a rule, the actual facts which are disputed, but only the inferences to be drawn from them. For instance, the statement that a Hebrew expression occurs 334 times in the Pentateuch, and 239 times in the rest of the Old Testament, may, as a rule, be accepted by one ignorant of Hebrew; while as to the value of this as an argument he can often draw his own conclusions.

But the most important part of the objection remains to be considered. It is, that many specialists, who have devoted years to the study of these very books, have decided *against* their authenticity; and this, it is said, is fatal to their claims. But when examined in detail, this objection will be found to be quite untenable. To begin with, it is an appeal to authority; and such a method of settling questions, unscientific and unsatisfactory at all times, is especially so in the present case, since, though many experts have decided against these books, many others of equal learning and ability have decided in their favour. For example, Baur, Strauss, Rénan, and many other critics have decided against the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel; but Ewald, Westcott, Salmon, and many others have decided in its favour; and to which set are we to appeal?

Moreover, those critics who agree that the various books are not authentic are far from being unanimous as to what actually was their origin. On many important points even

the most celebrated critics are hopelessly opposed. A theory is started by one, loudly proclaimed as the true solution for some years, and then overthrown, and even ridiculed, by another, who thinks he has found a less difficult method of discrediting the books; and his theory usually shares the same fate at the hands of some later critic. Indeed, this has been such a general rule as to justify an American sarcasm that 'Strauss laughs at Paulus, Baur laughs at Strauss, Rénan laughs at Baur, and the *hour-glass* laughs at them all.' Nor is it difficult to foresee how future critics will ridicule many of Rénan's conclusions, such as his account of the raising of Lazarus. (See Chap. xix.)

Again, it must be remembered that many men who have devoted years to the subjects treated of in the previous chapters of this essay have decided them contrary to how they have been decided here; and if the reader agrees with this essay so far, he must think those persons wrong who deny the existence of a Personal God, or the freedom and responsibility of man. And as it is frequently the same men who do this who deny the authenticity of the Bible, our disagreeing with them in the one case, where we can judge of the evidence, prevents our trusting them implicitly in the other, where, it is assumed, we cannot judge of it. Probably the number of men who admit that a miraculous revelation is credible, and who yet assert that the evidence in support of the Jewish and Christian religions is insufficient, are not very numerous.

But none of the above answers are felt to be quite satisfactory; they *lessen* the difficulty, but they do not *remove* it. For why, it may be asked, should any man of learning and ability decide against the authenticity of the Pentateuch and the Fourth Gospel if the evidence in their favour is very strong? And if it is not, why should we believe them? This is the real objection, and fortunately there is a complete and satisfactory answer—an answer which does not merely lessen the difficulty, but removes it altogether. Before explaining what this is, an analogy may be given to show clearly the difference between lessening and removing an objection.

Suppose, then, with reference to a game of chess, *A* asserts that at a particular position of a given opening White's best move is to *castle*, and brings forward strong arguments in support of this. *B* says that he knows very little about chess, and can scarcely follow the arguments; but he does know that two eminent chess-players, who have written books on this very opening, both recommend some other move, and therefore he will not be convinced whatever *A* may say. And if his friend were merely able to answer that these players were admittedly wrong in some cases, and that equally good players held the opposite view, this would lessen the objection, but it would not remove it; and if *B* chose to rely on these players alone, his position might seem impregnable. But now suppose *A* were able to prove that both these players belonged to a certain *New Chess Club*, one of the rules of which was that castling was forbidden in all cases. What would be the effect of this? It would not merely lessen the objection, but it would remove it altogether. For obviously these players did not admit the possibility of White's castling, but merely decided what was the next best move, assuming that to be out of the question.

Now, the case before us appears to the present writer to be precisely similar to this. The principal critics who deny the authenticity of the books of the Bible all belong to a certain *New School of Criticism* which rejects the supernatural altogether. A miracle is to them *incredible*. Trustworthy testimony to it is of course equally so, and hence those books of the Bible which, if authentic, would contain such testimony, must of necessity be not authentic. This principle has been admitted, either directly or indirectly, by all the leading writers of this school, such as Baur and Strauss in Germany, Rénan in France, and the author of "Supernatural Religion" in England, some of whom state it with surprising candour.

Thus *Baur* says, "The main argument for the later date of our Gospels is, after all, this—that they, one by one, and still more collectively, exhibit so much out of the life of Jesus in a way which is impossible," *i.e.*, miraculous, as the context

clearly shows.<sup>1</sup> Here it will be noticed the foregone conclusion that miracles are impossible is made the chief argument for saying the Gospels which record them are not authentic.

Next as to *Strauss*. He expresses his agreement with critics who adopt "the fundamental conviction that everything that happens, or ever happened, happened naturally; that even the most distinguished of men was still man; and that consequently the supernatural colouring in the accounts of early Christianity must be adventitious and unreal." Again he says, "In the person and acts of Jesus no supernaturalism shall be suffered to remain." And quite consistently he declares that none of the Gospels can be truly and fully historical, "for the simple reason that they contain supernaturalism." And though he does not assert that a miracle is impossible, yet he does assert that no historical evidence can possibly prove it. His words are, "Allowing the witness the best character, it is absolutely impossible to conceive a case in which the investigator of history will not find it more probable beyond all comparison that he has to deal with an untrue account, rather than with a miraculous fact."<sup>2</sup>

Passing on to *Rénan*, he is equally precise, for though he denies in so many words that a miracle is impossible, he certainly considers it what we have called in this essay, incredible. He says, "Till we have new light, we shall maintain, therefore, this principle of historical criticism, that a supernatural relation cannot be accepted as such, that it always implies credulity or imposture, that the duty of the historian is to interpret it, and to seek what portion of truth and what portion of error it may contain. Such are the rules which have been followed in the composition of this Life." Again he says, speaking of the Gospels being in part legendary, "That is evident, since they are full of miracles and the supernatural."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Pusey's "Lectures on Daniel," 7th edit., p. 6. I have not verified the reference.

<sup>2</sup> Strauss, "New Life of Jesus." Authorised translation. London, 1865, pp. x., xii., 34, 200.

<sup>3</sup> *Rénan's "Life of Jesus,"* translated by Wilbour. New York, 1864, pp. 44, 45, 17.

So, again, the author of "*Supernatural Religion*." He says, speaking of miracles, "There are the strongest reasons for affirming that such phenomena are antecedently incredible." And again, "Both the supernatural religion, therefore, and its supernatural evidence labour under the fatal disability of being antecedently incredible."<sup>1</sup>

It seems needless to give further quotations from less distinguished writers; but it may be pointed out that the principles here enunciated are consistently applied by critics of this school, not only to the books of the Bible as a whole, but to every miraculous or superhuman event they record. A couple of examples may be given from the Old and New Testaments.

Thus, *Knobel* says, "To maintain the genuineness of Isaiah chap. xxiii., and yet to refer it to a siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar more than a century later, as Jerome, &c., do, is impossible, in that, in Isaiah's time, there could be no anticipation of it, much less a confident and definite announcement of it. If any would refer the prophecy to that event, he must at least, with Eichhorn, Rosenmüller, Hitzig, hold it to be spurious." So again *Herzfeld* says, referring to Daniel, "That the prophecies of this book, so detailed throughout, must have been committed to writing after the events, is, as is well known, one of the very chiefest proofs that it is to be placed in the times of the Syrian persecutions."<sup>2</sup>

Again, *Rénan* says, speaking of St. Luke's Gospel, "The date of this Gospel may, moreover, be determined with much precision by considerations drawn from the book itself. Chapter xxi., inseparable from the rest of the work, was certainly written after the siege of Jerusalem, and soon after (vv. 9, 20, 24, 28, 32). We are here, therefore, on firm ground."<sup>3</sup> Here, it will be noticed, *Rénan* argues that the apparent prediction of the fall of Jerusalem in Luke xxi. makes it certain that the Gospel was written after that event; while the strong marks of genuineness contained in this very

<sup>1</sup> "*Supernatural Religion*," 2nd edit., 1874-77, pp. 78, 94.

<sup>2</sup> Both quoted in Pusey's "*Daniel*," pp. 6, 235.

<sup>3</sup> *Rénan's "Life of Jesus,"* p. 19.

chapter merely induce him to date it as soon after as possible. So also the author of "Supernatural Religion," speaking of Christ's resurrection, says, "The belief that a dead man rose from the dead and appeared to several persons alive, is at once disposed of upon abstract grounds. The alleged occurrence is contrary to universal experience."<sup>1</sup>

These quotations, which are mere samples of numbers which might be given, show clearly that the rejection of the supernatural is the basis of the new criticism. But to start with the assumption that miracles and predictions are incredible, and that therefore authentic evidence to them is equally so, is to give up the critical and historical argument altogether. What these writers have really decided on is:—What is the best explanation as to the origin of these books, assuming their authenticity to be, by hypothesis, out of the question? But this has plainly no bearing whatever on the question whether they are authentic or not.

Of course, it is not asserted that *every* critic who has decided against the authenticity of the books in question starts by assuming that he must do so. Historical and critical objections are often relied on to a considerable extent; but it appears to the present writer that these are more *excuses* than *reasons*, the real reason for disputing the books being in every case an antecedent or philosophical objection to the miraculous events recorded. And then, starting with this, they search for any slight evidence that can be found, either critical or historical, for proving it. Such a method of arguing has been happily described as a conclusion in search of its premises; and it is needless to add that, in a case of this sort, premises of some kind are generally found.

And this answers another difficulty. It is often said that all the books of the Bible the dates of which are undisputed, such as Ezra and Nehemiah, contain nothing miraculous. Of course not, otherwise their dates would be disputed. Or, to put the argument in other words, if all the miracles are purposely removed from the Bible, and declared to be not

<sup>1</sup> "Supernatural Religion," vol. iii. p. 522.



authentic, there is nothing surprising in the remainder, which are the admittedly genuine portions, containing no miracles. And the same principle applies to details. For instance, many of the ordinary events in Christ's life, such as His mother being named Mary, or His teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum, are scarcely ever disputed, though there is less evidence in their favour than for some of His miracles.

Under these circumstances we need not discuss further the objection that many specialists have decided *against* the authenticity of the books of the Bible. Fortunately their opponents, who maintain the *genuineness* of these books, can afford to lay aside all arguments founded on their own theological views as to the supernatural, and rely only on critical evidence.

The last part of the objection need not detain us: it is that the subject, being a long and complicated one, cannot be of much practical *importance*. But unfortunately this rule is quite inapplicable in other cases. In medical science, for instance, the difficulty of deciding as to the cause and proper treatment of a disease is no guide whatever as to its unimportance. And in the case of the Jewish and Christian religions, the subject is plainly one worthy of careful inquiry. For if these religions are true, they demand something more than mere belief. They require a man to frame his whole life in accordance with them, and therefore even the chance of their being true ought to make it worth his while to examine the subject for himself. And though this will take time, yet, considering the importance of Christianity, no one seems justified in rejecting it *without examination*, least of all a man who has himself been brought up a Christian. Anyhow, it is plain this essay is only addressed to those who do think the subject worthy of investigation; so we may dismiss this preliminary objection altogether.

#### (B.) MEANING OF THE JEWISH RELIGION.

We pass on now to the Jewish religion, and in this chapter we will examine whether this religion is *credible*, and if so, we will consider later on the evidence for and against its being *true*. There is, however, this difficulty at starting—

we have no convenient summary or definition as to what the Jewish religion includes. It will, however, be generally admitted that the Old Testament sets forth the claims of this religion, and its most striking doctrines are that at some early period God selected Abraham and his descendants as His own special people; that He revealed to them His will in various ways; that He delivered them miraculously from bondage in Egypt, and subsequently gave them an elaborate Law and Ritual; and that as long as they obeyed Him, He continued to help and instruct them, often using miraculous signs, either to confirm His revelation, to protect His servants, or to destroy their enemies.

Now, that such a religion seems improbable for many reasons scarcely needs to be pointed out; but is it incredible? Many will at once answer that it is, because of the alleged *partiality* to the Jews. God, it is said, is the just God of all mankind, and it is incredible that He should have selected a single nation to be His special favourites, more particularly since His alleged attempt to make them a holy people proved such a hopeless failure; while, it is urged, the very fact of the Jews believing Jehovah to be their special God shows that they regarded Him as a mere national God, bearing the same relation to themselves as the gods of other nations did to them.

But, to begin with, as said in Chap. vii., any revelation from God implies a certain *partiality* to the men or nation to whom it is given; but it is not therefore incredible. And there is certainly no reason why the Jews should not have been the nation chosen, and some slight reason why they should; for their ancestor Abraham was not selected without a reason. He did, partly at least, deserve it, since, judging by the only accounts we have, he showed the most unbounded confidence in God in leaving his home in Haran, and the most implicit obedience to God in his willingness to offer up Isaac; and such confidence and obedience may well have deserved a blessing. It must also be remembered that God's so-called *partiality* to the Jews did not imply any indulgence to them in the sense of overlooking their faults. On the contrary, He is

represented all along as blaming and punishing them, just as much as other nations, for their iniquities.

Next, as to God's purpose in regard to Israel having been a *failure*. This is only partly true. No doubt the Israelites were, with many bright exceptions, a sinful nation; but they were not worse than, or even so bad as, the nations around them; it was only the fact of their being the chosen race that made their sins so heinous. Their high vocation involved corresponding duties, and it was for not fulfilling these that the prophets blamed them so severely. They had free will, just as men have now; and if they chose to misuse their freedom and act wrong, that was not God's fault. Moreover, Israel was not selected merely for her own sake, but for the sake of all mankind. This is expressly stated at the very commencement, "*In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*"<sup>1</sup> And, quite apart from any reference to Christianity, this plan has been successful; for however sinful the nation may have been, they preserved and handed on God's revelation, and the Old Testament remains, and will always remain, as a permanent and priceless treasure of religion.

The last part of the objection, that God's alleged selection of the Israelites shows that they believed their Jehovah to be only a national God, may be dismissed at once, for the fact proves precisely the opposite. For if Jehovah specially *selected* Israel to be His people, He must have had a power of choice, and might, if He pleased, have selected some other nation. So that He could not have been a mere national God, but the God of all nations, with power to select among them. Moreover, many of the writers who most emphasise Israel's selection also assert, and in the very same passages, that Jehovah was the God of other nations as well.<sup>2</sup>

We conclude, then, that God's partiality to the Jews is not so very unlikely as to make their religion incredible. To put it shortly, if a revelation is given at all, some individuals must be selected to receive it; if it is given gradually, these men must in all probability belong to a single nation; and if

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 12. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Gen. 15. 14; Deut. 32. 8; 2 Chron. 20. 6; Isa. 37. 16.

one nation has to be selected, there is no reason why the Jews should not have been the one chosen, and some slight reason why they should ; while, if they were selected for the purpose of handing on God's revelation to the world at large, the purpose has been completely successful. But, in addition to the above objection, there is one other which is often thought to make the Jewish religion incredible, and this refers to its alleged miracles.

(C.) THE JEWISH MIRACLES.

Now, we decided in the last chapter that what we called *Miraculous Signs* were credible, so we have only to consider here whether the Old Testament miracles really come under that definition or not. It will be remembered that we divided miraculous signs into the two classes of Superhuman and Supernatural Events.

(a.) *Superhuman Events.*

With regard to these, which include *Prophecies* and *Superhuman Coincidences*, further discussion is needless, since, whether true or false, it is obvious that many of the events recorded in the Old Testament are of precisely such a character, and are therefore credible. Moreover, many of what are popularly called miracles really belong to this class of Superhuman Coincidences—such, for instance, as the falling of the walls of Jericho, probably due to an earthquake ; the swallowing up of Korah ; the lightning which consumed Elijah's sacrifice ; very possibly the Deluge ; and many others, including some which appear at first sight to be strictly miraculous. We will consider three examples of the latter class.

*The "silence" (or standing still) of the sun and moon.*<sup>1</sup>—This event is often thought to involve an entire dislocation of the solar system, due to the earth's rotation being stopped, thus causing the sun and moon to apparently *stand still*. And it is justly urged that a miracle on so vast a scale, even if possible, is quite out of proportion to the end in view, which was merely the slaughter of a few Amorites. God, it is said, is always economical of force, and such a stupendous miracle for such a

<sup>1</sup> Josh. 10. 12-14.

trivial object seems quite incredible. But it is obvious that such a dislocation would involve the earth in utter confusion, and this the narrative disallows. Everything, we are led to infer, went on as usual, except in regard to this one battle in Canaan. We must therefore seek for some other explanation, and a very probable one has been suggested.

The miracle is generally assumed to be one of prolonged light, the sun remaining visible after it should have set. But it seems probable that it was really one of prolonged darkness; the sun, which had been hidden by thick clouds, being just about to shine forth, when it was commanded by Joshua to *be silent, i.e.*, to remain obscured behind the clouds, which it did during the rest of the day. The Hebrew appears to be capable of either meaning. For the crucial word translated *stand still* is literally *be silent* (see margin), and this is far more applicable to the sun's remaining obscured by clouds during the day than to its continuing to shine at night; while, on the other hand, the rest of the passage seems to favour the ordinary view.

Assuming, then, that either meaning is possible, a prolonged darkness is much the more probable for three reasons. To begin with, Joshua is more likely to have wanted it. We read that just before the miracle there had been a very heavy thunderstorm, involving thick clouds and a nearly black sky; and this is stated to have been the chief cause of the defeat of the Amorites. And hence it is plain that Joshua is more likely to have asked for a continuance of this storm, *i.e.*, for prolonged darkness, than for light. Secondly, the moon is mentioned as well as the sun. Now, if Joshua wanted darkness, the shining of either would be prejudicial, so both would naturally have been ordered to be "silent;" but if he wanted light, the mention of the moon is quite unnecessary, since when the sun is shining the moon's light is insignificant. Lastly, the duration assigned to the miracle agrees with the proposed theory, for the battle seems to have occurred soon after sunrise, and the darkness continuing *about a whole day* is quite explicable; while, on the other theory, it is not clear whether the light lasted altogether for twenty-four or thirty-six hours.

On the whole, then, the miracle seems to have been a super-

human coincidence between certain words of Joshua and an extraordinary and unique thunderstorm, which caused both the sun and moon to remain *silent* or invisible all day; a coincidence, however, so remarkable, that, if true, it would have considerable value.

*The shadow on the dial.*<sup>1</sup>—Here it will be remembered that the shadow on the dial is said to have gone back ten *steps*; and this is often thought to involve a corresponding backward movement in the earth's rotation. But such a view is quite inadmissible, since the miracle was confined to Palestine, and did not extend to Babylon.<sup>2</sup> It may easily have been caused by an earthquake. The dial was apparently a flight of steps with some object on the top which threw a shadow on a gradually decreasing number of these as the sun rose, and the miracle consisted in the shadow suddenly going back so as to again cover some steps which it had left; and an earthquake, causing a depression of the ground at one end, or an upheaval at the other, would quite account for this. There need not, therefore, be anything supernatural here, and yet the evidential value of the miracle is scarcely affected.

*The passage of the Red Sea.*—This also may be explained as a superhuman coincidence, a ridge of land across the sea being temporarily raised above the water by a slight natural upheaval. And the word translated *wall* ("the waters were a wall unto them") may, I believe, be translated *boundary*, merely meaning that the waters flanked them on each side. Of course, if it means the waters stood up vertically, it would become an evidential miracle; but otherwise the event can be explained by natural causes. And these are distinctly alluded to both in Exodus and in the Psalms, where strong winds lasting all night and an earthquake are spoken of.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the miracle would not lose any of its evidential value, since the fact of such a strip of dry land being formed just when and where the Israelites so much wanted it, and

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 20. 8-11.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. 32. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. 14. 21; Ps. 77. 18.

then suddenly subsiding again, would be a coincidence far too improbable to be accidental.

(b.) *Supernatural Events.*

We pass on now to the alleged supernatural events, or *evidential miracles*. It will be remembered that such miracles may be regarded from three points of view: either as to their outward aspect, in which case they are simply marvels which natural forces cannot account for; or else as to their cause, in which case they are special works of God; or else as to their purpose, in which case they are signs to attest a revelation.

Now, the Old Testament writers, judging by the *names* they give to miracles, seem to regard them from the same three points of view, though their miracles also include events which we should call superhuman coincidences. The first aspect is expressed by the word *wonder*; the second by such phrases as *by a mighty hand* or *outstretched arm*; and the third by the word *sign*. And that these terms represent different aspects of the same miracles, and not different kinds of miracles, is shown by their all being applied to those of the Exodus.<sup>1</sup> There is also a fourth term, *temptation* or testing, the meaning of which appears to be that the miracle is there regarded as a test of man's belief, forcing him to either definitely accept or reject the revelation; but this does not affect our present inquiry. We must now consider whether, apart from mere names, the events described are such as we have called evidential miracles.

(1.) *Miracles as marvels.*—Little need be said here, since it is evident that many of the events, if true, were marvels, out of nature's usual course, and such as nature by itself would not have brought about; and it may be added the writers themselves attribute this marvellous character to them.

(2.) *Miracles as special works of God.*—Next, as to the causation of the miracles. The writers nowhere lay down any definite theory, but from incidental notices it seems that their view completely harmonises with that required for evidential

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Deut. 4. 34; 6. 22; 7. 19; 11. 2; 26. 8; 29. 3.

miracles. For, on the one hand, they frequently speak of them as specially brought about by God; and yet, on the other, they could not have meant that they were due to His action alone and without any natural causes, since they use similar language in describing the ordinary events in nature. For example, the sun's daily rising and setting, the formation of clouds and rain, the growth of grass, and other natural phenomena, are expressly assigned to God; while the same language is used to describe the miraculous giving of the Law to the Israelites.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Scripture writers do not recognise any sharp distinction between the natural and the supernatural, but look upon them all as God's works; from which it is plain that they could not have meant to exclude all natural forces in the production of the miracles. And therefore they correspond in this respect with evidential miracles, which, as before said, claim to be brought about by natural forces, only under God's directing influence. We are, of course, assuming that the outward acts preceding the miracles—such as the lifting of a rod, the touch of a hand, or the vibration of the air caused by some one's voice—were not the whole cause of their occurrence. This is too obvious to need discussion; indeed, one might as well think the turning of a telegraph handle is the whole cause of the message travelling along the wire.

Only one question remains to be discussed under this head. Are the Old Testament miracles such as could possibly have been brought about by God's using natural forces and without violating natural laws? Many of them certainly could. For instance, the sudden recovery of any one from sickness is not, as a phenomenon, more out of nature's usual course than a steam-engine. And yet we know that man can produce the latter without violating natural laws; and therefore we assume that God could equally well produce the former, if He wished it. In fact, we know so little about the laws connected with sickness, that it is out of the question to say that a sudden recovery must violate them.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 104; 147.



But there are still a few cases where the explanation seems more difficult. One such example is the passage of the Jordan,<sup>1</sup> which has been already considered in the last chapter as a typical evidential miracle; so we will choose two others here. And we will first take the three men in the furnace.<sup>2</sup> That this is an event which we cannot explain by natural laws is obvious, but need it violate them? Certainly not, since even if we admit that a man's body must be kept below a certain temperature to sustain life, we cannot say that this was impossible in the furnace. For extreme heat and even extreme cold may be very close together, as is shown by the well-known experiment of freezing mercury inside a red-hot crucible. Here, then, we have a good example of an evidential miracle—an event, that is to say, inexplicable by natural laws known to us; but which still need not violate them.

As a second example we will consider the miraculous increase of the bread (and similarly the oil) by Elijah.<sup>3</sup> Now bread is composed of the elements carbon, oxygen, &c., and these were in abundance all round. And though we only know one way in which they can be formed into bread, which is through the agency of a living plant, we cannot say this is the only method. For there is nothing incredible in organic substances, including bread itself, being made in the laboratory some day. This does not of course show how the miracle was wrought, nor is it necessary to do so, but it does show that no law of nature need have been violated; and much the same applies in other cases.

(3.) *Miracles as signs.*—Passing on now to the last aspect of the miracles, it cannot be denied that most of them claim to have been signs to attest the accompanying revelation. Not only is this evident from the whole narrative, but it is asserted in so many words over and over again. It may be objected, however, that some of them were *unsuited* for this purpose from their secrecy or their triviality. And we will consider an example of each, though they might all be rejected without

<sup>1</sup> Josh. 3. 14-17.

<sup>2</sup> Dan. 3. 20-27.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings 17. 14-16.

materially affecting the argument, since the other miracles, if admitted, are quite sufficient to prove the truth of the religion.

As an instance of the *secret* miracles we may take the speaking of Balaam's ass. This miracle was plainly intended to teach Balaam himself some truth. He, it will be remembered, was a prophet, one who had the special gift of speaking in God's name. But in this instance he was intent on misusing this gift, and was hastening to Balak obviously intending and wishing to curse Israel in God's name, but without God's direction. On the way he was suddenly stopped by the power of speech being conferred on an animal, to forcibly convince him that, if he did not choose to speak as God directed, God could send other messengers—dumb animals, if need be—to speak in His name. This seems to have been the lesson intended, and it certainly had this effect, for subsequently Balaam keeps repeating over and over again that he could only speak as God told him.<sup>1</sup> Now, viewed in this light, it cannot be said that the miracle was useless. It may have been the very means of preventing Balaam from giving out falsehood instead of truth as the revelation he had received from God; and what could have been of more importance than this? All idea, then, of the miracle being useless, because it occurred in secret, is at an end.

Next, as to the *trivial* miracles, such as Elisha's healing the waters of Jericho, multiplying the widow's oil, and making the iron axe-head to float.<sup>4</sup> Now, if we regard these only as acts of kindness to individual persons, no doubt they seem trivial; but if we regard them as so many signs to the people that Elisha was really God's prophet, and that God was not a far-off God, but One who knew about and cared about their everyday troubles, they are certainly not inappropriate. Indeed, if this was the end in view, as it certainly may have been, they were precisely the kind of miracles most suited to attain this end.

One more objection remains to be considered under this

<sup>1</sup> Num. 22. 38; 23. 8, 12, 20, 26.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 2. 22; 4. 6; 6. 6.

head, which strikes at the evidential value of all the miracles. It is urged that they could not really have attested any revelation from God, since the writers who describe them also describe other miracles in similar terms, wrought, they say, in opposition to God's agents and for the express purpose of discrediting the revelation. I have not met with an entirely satisfactory explanation of these *diabolical miracles*, as they are called; and if such events were of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, they would form a great difficulty. But this is not the case. If we exclude some doubtful instances, such as the raising of Samuel by the witch of Endor, and some general statements about the powers of evil being able to perform marvels, there remains only one instance in which we have any detailed facts to judge by.

This is the case of the magicians of Egypt, who imitated some of the earlier miracles of Moses and Aaron, such as the turning of rods into serpents and the plague of the frogs. But even here the inference is doubtful, for we are expressly told that this was due to their *enchantments*, a term which might very possibly cover some feat of jugglery; and as the Egyptians seem to have had time to prepare, after having heard of what Moses and Aaron did, there is nothing incredible in their being able to imitate it; while the fact that they tried and failed to imitate the next plague of the lice, which they frankly confessed was a Divine miracle, makes this a very probable solution.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the earlier miracles which could be thus imitated by jugglery have no evidential value; but this does not concern us at present. And even if we assume that the writer meant that the Egyptians were assisted by supernatural powers, the passage is at most little more than a *one-text* difficulty, and cannot be said to imply that a belief in diabolical miracles was a part of the Jewish religion.

We have now examined the various objections brought against the Old Testament miracles as to their credibility; and though they may, and do, render certain particular

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 7. 11; 8. 7, 18, 19.

miracles improbable, yet this improbability does not seem sufficient in any case to render them incredible, still less to render the whole religion incredible. To put it shortly, scientific difficulties of this kind affect all miracles equally, and there is no special difficulty as to the Old Testament ones, provided miracles at all are credible. Still it is plain that these difficulties, combined with the apparent partiality of the religion, and with some moral difficulties considered in Chap. xiv., do render the Jewish religion *improbable*, and therefore strong evidence is required to make us accept it. Whether there is such evidence or not we have now to examine.

## CHAPTER X

### THAT ITS ORIGIN WAS ATTESTED BY MIRACULOUS SIGNS

Great importance of the Pentateuch, depending chiefly on its date.

(A.) THE LANGUAGE OF THE PENTATEUCH.

In general character it resembles the Hebrew Prophets, but its numerous archaisms point to a much earlier time.

(B.) THE HISTORIES OF THE PENTATEUCH.

(a.) Direct indications of date.

(b.) The *Egypticity* of certain parts.

(c.) The *Deserticity* of other parts.

(d.) Their comparative study; (1) discrepancies; (2) undesigned coincidences.

(e.) Their apparent truthfulness.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

The histories are, on the whole, contemporary narratives; and we hence seem forced to admit many of the miraculous signs they record. Slight objection from there being no confirming evidence from other sources.

In the last chapter we explained what is meant by the Jewish religion, and showed that that religion, though it had many difficulties, was certainly credible. We have now to examine what evidence there is for and against its being true. In this chapter we will consider its *origin*—that is to say, the events connected with the exodus from Egypt. And as the only account we have of these is contained in the *Pentateuch*, it is of the utmost importance to examine this book carefully. Is it a trustworthy, and, on the whole, accurate account of the events which it records? And this depends chiefly on its date, by which is meant, not its date absolutely in years B.C., which would be difficult to decide, since the chronology is much disputed, but its date relatively to the events which it

describes. Is it a *contemporary* document? If so, it is of very great value; if not, though it may be equally valuable, we cannot feel equally sure that it is so.

And there is an important point to notice at starting. It is, that modern discoveries have shown conclusively that there is nothing in the Pentateuch, except the earlier chapters of Genesis, which on a *a priori* grounds could not have been contemporaneous with the events recorded. For we now know that writing was in common use in Babylonia and Egypt many centuries before the time of Abraham, and these are precisely the two countries with which the ancestors of the Jews had most to do. While as to literary style, the documents and inscriptions of this period are quite as advanced and developed in character as any of the narratives in the Pentateuch. Moreover, the discoveries at Tell-Amarna show that in Palestine also writing was well known and regularly employed years before the country was conquered by Joshua. There is thus no *a priori* reason why everything, from at least the time of Abraham, should not have been written down as it occurred.

Indeed, the probability is the other way; for the family of Abraham seem to have been of princely rank, and were doubtless well educated in Chaldæa; so that we should expect written accounts of any remarkable events that happened to them to be preserved in the family. While as to Moses, the civilised state of Egypt at the time makes it practically certain that he and the other leaders of Israel could write if they chose. And considering that they somehow or other brought the Israelites out of Egypt, it is extremely probable that they should have recorded it. But did they, and do we possess this record in the Pentateuch? This is the important question; and the evidence by which to determine it is chiefly internal, which simplifies the inquiry a good deal. For convenience we will first consider the *language* of the whole Pentateuch, and then the arguments bearing on the date of its *historical* portions, together with their evidential value; the special arguments connected with the *legislative* portions being left for the next chapter.

## (A.) THE LANGUAGE OF THE PENTATEUCH.

Now, the Pentateuch was written in Hebrew, and obviously the first thing to do is to compare its language with that of other Hebrew writings of approximately known date. Unfortunately, we have no such writings, the date of which is undisputed, till many centuries after the time when the Pentateuch may have been written. And this weakens the value of this criterion very much, so we need only examine it briefly.

To begin with, it is admitted that the *general character* of the language of the Pentateuch strongly resembles that of some of the prophets, such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel. And it is sometimes urged that as a language must change considerably in the course of centuries, this shows the Pentateuch cannot have been written many centuries before that time. But the assumption is incorrect. No doubt most European languages are continually changing; but if we consider Arabic, which, being allied to Hebrew, is an especially appropriate example, the case is otherwise, for it is stated on good authority that the Arabic now used round Mecca differs but slightly from that of the Koran.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the old Egyptian language remained practically the same for many centuries. All, then, we can say is, that the resemblance in language between the Pentateuch and the Prophets suggests a late date for the former, but it certainly does not establish the point, if for other reasons a much earlier date is probable.

But it is further urged that we have two actual *signs of late date*. The first is that the word commonly used for *west* in the Pentateuch really means *the sea*, and hence, it is said, the writer's standpoint must have been that of Canaan, and the books must have been written after the settlement in that country. But the fallacy here is obvious. In all probability this word was adopted in the Hebrew language before the time of Abraham, when the sea, *i.e.*, the Mediterranean, actually was to the west. And in later years a Hebrew writing in Egypt or anywhere else would naturally use the common

<sup>1</sup> Pusey's "Daniel," p. 36.

word for west, without thinking that it was etymologically inappropriate to that particular place. When once words have acquired a conventional use, it is always unsound to argue from their derivation; and to do so would prove, among other things, that the English still worship Woden and Thor, because two days of the week are still named after them.

The other expression is *beyond Jordan*, which is frequently used in the Pentateuch to denote the *eastern* bank; and hence again, it is urged, the writer's standpoint must have been that of Canaan. But this view is quite untenable. For in Joshua xii. this term means the eastern bank in v. 1, and the western in v. 7. And an exactly similar case occurs in two other chapters, in each of which this same term is used for both banks.<sup>1</sup> It is plain, then, that no inference as to the writer's locality, and hence as to the date of the book, can be drawn from the use of this expression. It really means *beside* Jordan, since it is used indifferently of either bank, wherever the writer may be; while in the A.V., but not in the R.V., it is translated *on this side* or *on that side*, so as best to suit the sense. Moreover, the term is frequently qualified by such expressions as *towards the sun's rising* or *towards the sun's setting*, which would have been needless if the term itself had signified either bank. This objection, then, must also be dismissed.

On the other hand, there are several *signs of early date*, for the Pentateuch contains a variety of archaisms. Of course, most of these can only be understood by a Hebrew scholar; but this is the less to be regretted, because, I believe, the fact is undisputed. We will therefore give a couple of examples only, which are plain to the English reader. The pronoun for *he* is commonly used throughout the Pentateuch both for male and female; while in the later writings it is confined to males, the females being expressed by a derived form which is very seldom used in the Pentateuch. Similarly, the word for *youth* is used in the Pentateuch for both sexes, though afterwards restricted to males only, the female being again expressed by

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 3. 8, 20, 25; Josh. 9. 1, 10.



a derived form. These differences, though small, are very significant, and they clearly show that the language was at a less developed, and therefore earlier stage, in the Pentateuch than in the rest of the Old Testament.

And precisely the same is shown by the names and terms in common use. For example, the names *Lord of Hosts* and *God of Israel*, which are common in the later books, are practically unknown in the Pentateuch, the former being entirely absent, and the latter only occurring four times. On the other hand, the term *God of the Hebrews*, which is an older title than God of Israel, is used six times in the Pentateuch, and not elsewhere. Again, as to the common terms for the people. Two of the most frequent of these are *children of Israel* and *Israel*; the latter being plainly a contracted and subsequent form of the other, and one which would be more suitable when the idea of a family or tribe had given way to that of a nation. Israel, it will be remembered, was another name for Jacob, whose sons were the ancestors of the twelve tribes. Now the term *children of Israel* occurs in the Pentateuch 334 times, and *Israel* 101 times; while in the rest of the Old Testament the figures are 239 and 1074 respectively. Of course, the above examples are only striking instances of what has been observed with regard to many other words and phrases. Those in common use in the Pentateuch are not so in the other books, while those in common use in the other books are not so in the Pentateuch. There must thus have been a long interval of time between them.

This concludes a short examination of the language of the Pentateuch. Its archaisms, as just said, imply that it was written some centuries before most of the books of the Old Testament; and yet in general style its language resembles them, for Hebrew as a whole changed little during centuries. Now, all historical analogy would lead us to refer this to the existence of some early and sacred writing, such as the Pentateuch professes to be, which fixed the standard. Take, for instance, the Authorised Version of the English Bible. The occasional archaisms in this show its antiquity; and yet in general style it agrees with the English of to-day. The

reason is obvious. It has itself to a great extent fixed the language ever since it was published. Now, the Hebrew of the Pentateuch presents us with exactly the same phenomena. Its language is precisely what we should expect in a very ancient document of sufficient importance to have set for ages the style and character of Hebrew literature, more especially of sacred literature like itself, of which alone we have any knowledge.

Of course, there is an alternative theory, which is that the Pentateuch was written at a late date, and that these archaic terms were either purposely inserted to give the work the air of antiquity, or else are fragments of some earlier documents which the late writer incorporated in his narrative. And on this latter supposition, critics, relying on slight differences of style and language, have split up the book into a large number of different writings, which they assign to a number of imaginary writers from the ninth century B.C. onwards.

A vast amount of ingenuity has been spent, or mis-spent, on this *patchwork theory*, as it is called, almost every chapter being split up among different writers. And considering how much depends on the individual opinion of the critic, it is not surprising that critics are not agreed even as to the number of different writers, let alone as to their relative or actual dates, and the portions to be assigned to each. But even in a passage where only three writers are supposed to be involved, there is much room for ingenuity. Take, for example, Exod. vii. 14-25. These twelve verses seem to the ordinary reader a straightforward narrative, but Dr. Driver thus splits them up.<sup>1</sup> He assigns vv. 19, 22, and parts of 20, 21, to P, the supposed writer of the priestly code of Leviticus; vv. 14, 15, 16, 18, 23, 25, and part of 17, to J; and the remainder, that is, v. 24, and parts of 17, 20, 21, to E; the two latter writers being thus named from their generally describing the Deity as Jehovah and Elohim respectively.

Fortunately, we need not discuss the minute and often complicated arguments on which all this rests, for the principle

<sup>1</sup> "Introduction to Literature of Old Testament," p. 22.

itself is unsound. We cannot determine the date of a book, still less that of its component parts, by its language alone. This is proved conclusively if we apply the same method to a book the origin of which we do know, say the English Prayer Book. It is doubtful whether any one judging by language alone, and without historical evidence or tradition, could make even approximately good guesses as to which are the oldest parts of this book, let alone reconstructing the original documents from which it was compiled. Moreover, the Pentateuch, as will be shown later on, has strong claims to a *contemporary* origin. And if so, it is of little consequence whether it was the work of one or more writers; though the idea of their writings being so hopelessly intermixed seems in any case to be most improbable.

(B.) THE HISTORIES OF THE PENTATEUCH.

We pass on now to the historical portions of the Pentateuch, and will examine their date under the five following heads.

(a.) *Direct indications of date.*

Now, since a large part of the history deals with events in the lifetime of Moses, up to and including his death, it is plain that it cannot date from before that time. There are also two passages in which later events are historically alluded to.<sup>1</sup> In the former we have a list of eight Edomite kings who are said to have reigned *before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*, and this brings the passage down to the time of Saul. But it is probably a later insertion, since the dukes of Edom mentioned in vv. 40-43 seem naturally to follow those of Seir in vv. 29, 30. Doubtless the original narrative gave Esau's genealogy down to the time of the writer, and this extra passage was probably added by some subsequent editor, bringing the Edomite history down to his own time. In the latter we have a reference to the *conquest of Canaan* by the Israelites; but as the first conquest was effected in six years,<sup>2</sup> this passage need not be more than six years later than the death of Moses, and so does not prevent the narrative from being contemporary. There is also a third passage containing

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 36. 31-39; Dent. 2. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Josh. 14. 10.

a *eulogy of Moses*, which is often appealed to as showing a late date.<sup>1</sup> But here the inference is at least doubtful. Those who had been led through the desert by Moses would be the ones to feel his loss most keenly, and might thus have expressed themselves only a few years after his death.

But, in addition to these statements, there are several *explanatory notes* which afford important evidence as to when they were written. For instance, in two passages referring to Abraham it is added that *the Canaanite was then in the land*.<sup>2</sup> This was plainly to prevent a possible misconception that at the time of his journey the land was uninhabited. Now, this misconception could only have arisen after the conquest of the land by Joshua; and hence to this period we must assign these passages. But from the way in which they occur they appear to be additions by a later hand; and if so, this would point to the earlier date of the rest of the narrative, which was written when such explanations were thought unnecessary.

Next, as to the *omer*. This is explained as being the *tenth part of an ephah*,<sup>3</sup> and therefore, as the omer must have been very familiar to the Israelites in the desert, the clause must be a later addition, when it had fallen into disuse. But the rest of the chapter is clearly of an earlier if not of a contemporary date, when the omer was well known and needed no explanation.

Next, there are ten passages where monuments, customs, &c., are stated to be in existence *unto this day*.<sup>4</sup> The first seven refer to patriarchal times, and therefore do not necessitate a later date than shortly after the conquest of Canaan. The next two must evidently refer to a later time; but in both instances the phrase occurs in a passage which seems to form no part of the original speech, and is placed in brackets in the R.V. It may therefore be considered a later addition. In the last case the inference is doubtful. The fact of the mysterious death of Moses would soon have become notorious, and might in a few years have led to the

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 34. 10-12.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 12. 6; 13. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. 16. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 19. 37, 38; 22. 14; 26. 33; 32. 32; 35. 20; 47. 26; Deut. 2. 22; 3. 14; 34. 6.

remark that no man knew his sepulchre *unto this day*, in spite of numerous searches having been made. On the other hand, a long time after his death, there would be nothing remarkable in his sepulchre not being known.

Again, in six passages, after the name of a place is added some such phrase as *which is in Canaan*.<sup>1</sup> Now, as there do not appear to be any other places of the same name liable to be confused with these, we must seek for some other explanation of its use. When, then, would it be necessary to lay emphasis on the fact that these places, Shechem, Luz, and Mamre, were in Canaan? Certainly not after the conquest, when it was evident to every one; nor during the march through the desert, when the Israelites scarcely needed reminding that their goal was Canaan. The expressions must probably be referred to the sojourn in Egypt. During that period there would be great danger of the Israelites forgetting that Egypt was not their home, and that Canaan was the land promised to their forefathers; and hence it would be only natural for a writer of that period to frequently emphasise the fact that the Israelites' promised possessions were, not in Egypt, but in Canaan.

Next, as to *Anah*.<sup>2</sup> He is referred to as the person who found the hot springs in the wilderness; but no such incident is recorded, or, as far as we know, ever was recorded anywhere. Evidently when the passage was written the incident was still fresh in the people's memory and sufficient to identify the man. But then the writer must have lived very near the time in question, and Anah appears to have been a contemporary of Joseph.

Next, as to the *desert of Shur*, which is described as being *before Egypt as thou goest towards Assyria*.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, then, this purports to have been written in Egypt, since only to one living there would Shur appear on the way to Assyria. But there is nothing in the context to require the adoption of Egypt as a standpoint, so we must assume

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 23. 2, 19; 33. 18; 35. 6; 48. 3; 49. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 36. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 25. 18.

it to be the natural standpoint of the writer of this part of Genesis.

Going still further back, we may notice the explanations, *Bela* (*the same is Zoar*), and *the vale of Siddim* (*the same is the Salt Sea*).<sup>1</sup> These notes appear to be additions at a later time, when the ancient names were no longer intelligible. This would certainly have been the case in the time of Joshua, so they need not be later than the rest of the Pentateuch; while the original text must of course be referred to a much earlier period. The Vale of Siddim is the ancient name for the depression which, after the destruction of Sodom, became covered by the Dead Sea; and as this name is twice used in the chapter without explanation, we must assume that it was the one familiar to the writer, which would place the passage in the time of Abraham. There are, however, two alleged signs of a later date in this same chapter, the mention of the Amalekites and of Dan. The former are assumed to be the descendants of Esau's grandson named Amalek, and the latter the city so named by Joshua.<sup>2</sup> But as there is nothing to identify them except sameness of name, the inference is at least doubtful. Nor is it impossible that a later editor may have substituted the more modern names for some earlier ones, without, as in the above cases, retaining the others as well.

Lastly, as to *Gerar and Sodom*.<sup>3</sup> In this single verse are several indications of a very early date. First, the town *Gaza* has its position pointed out by reference to another place, *Gerar*, which was better known than itself. But *Gaza* was one of the most important cities in Canaan from the time of the conquest onwards, and certainly needed no explanation as to its position. Indeed, as early as Joshua 10. 41 it is itself used to mark certain limits. Next, as to this better known place, *Gerar*, it was an important city only in patriarchal times, for it is but once mentioned afterwards.<sup>4</sup> Thirdly, it will be noticed that *Sodom* and its neighbouring cities are

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 14. 2, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 10. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 36. 12; Josh. 19. 47.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Chron. 14. 13.

spoken of as still in existence; while *Zoar*, the one survivor of the catastrophe, is naturally omitted altogether, as it was then an insignificant place.<sup>1</sup>

We may now sum up the evidence afforded by these *explanatory notes*. The first three show that certain small additions must have been made to the narrative after the conquest of Canaan; but they are of such an isolated character as not to carry any of the context with them, and may all be omitted without breaking the continuity of the narrative. The next three show that some portions of the history were written in Egypt. While the others point to a still earlier date, probably as far back as the time of Abraham. And the value of this to our present inquiry is merely that it removes any possible objection that Hebrew was not a literary language at the long subsequent time of the Exodus.

Before leaving this subject one further remark must be made. It was the common custom in ancient times for notes on a previous document to be incorporated in the text, and not put at the bottom of the page or at the end of the book, as at present. And hence adding such notes does not imply any dishonesty on the part of the subsequent editor; he was merely endeavouring to make the original sense more easily understood. It therefore differs altogether from composing a whole narrative and falsely ascribing it to some earlier writer. This latter proceeding would entirely destroy our confidence in the document; the former merely gives us, as we have seen, valuable hints as to when it was written.

(b.) *The Egyptianity of the narrative.*

By this is meant that the part of the Pentateuch in which reference is made to Egyptian customs, seasons, and names appears to be written with correct details throughout. This would of course be only natural in a contemporary writer acquainted with Egypt, but would be most unlikely for a later writer in Canaan. The evidence cannot of course be properly appreciated without some knowledge of ancient Egypt; but as it would be unfair to omit it altogether, we will give some

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 19. 20.

examples, which have been chiefly selected from the "Speaker's Commentary."

We must first notice three cases where it may be said that the writer seems *not* to have been a contemporary, since Egyptian customs are there *explained*, as if unknown to the reader. These are their eating at different tables from the Hebrews, their abhorrence of shepherds, and their habit of embalming.<sup>1</sup> But the first probably concerned the Egyptian aristocracy only, of which the Israelites might have been ignorant even when living in Egypt. The second passage may not be a remark of the historian, but part of Joseph's speech, explaining why a border region like Goshen was given to the Israelites. And the inference from the third passage appears doubtful, though rather in favour of a late date.

Passing on now to the evidence in favour of a contemporary origin, we will first consider the history of Joseph, in which there are several points to notice. For instance, the details of the *king's dreams* are peculiarly Egyptian.<sup>2</sup> Cattle coming up out of the river and feeding on the reed-grass on its banks was a common sight in Egypt, but in Canaan it must have been almost unknown. In the same way *seven-eared wheat*, which is a well-known product of Egypt, is nowhere mentioned as grown in Canaan. Next, when Joseph was summoned to appear before Pharaoh, it is mentioned that he *shaved*. To any one familiar with Egypt nothing could be more natural than this; but to an Israelite, on the other hand, it would be most unnatural.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, it is mentioned that the priests not only had land of their own, but also received *a portion from Pharaoh* sufficient for their support.<sup>4</sup> This statement is fully confirmed by ancient documents and inscriptions, but no such portion ever existed in regard to the priesthood of Israel.

Next, as to the history of Moses. His being exposed in an ark of *papyrus* smeared with bitumen was quite suited to Egypt, where both materials were commonly used, but would have been most unsuitable anywhere else. Again, we find the

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 43. 32; 46. 34; 50. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 41. 2, 5, 14.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Sam. 10. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 47. 22.



use of *straw* in brickmaking is alluded to, as is also the custom of reaping the corn *close to the ear*, so as to leave the bulk of the straw standing in the field as stubble.<sup>1</sup> Both of these were undoubtedly Egyptian customs; but, as far as we know, the Israelites in Canaan never made bricks with straw, while their reaping was more like our own, the corn being tied up in sheaves instead of collected in baskets.<sup>2</sup>

Again, it is said, when speaking of the death of the firstborn, *against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments*, but no explanation is given of what is meant by this.<sup>3</sup> It of course refers to the Egyptian idolatry in worshipping *living* animals; but this would only be familiar to a writer in Egypt, since, as far as we know, such worship was never practised in Canaan. Again, we read of laws being written on the door-posts and gates of houses, and on great stones previously covered with plaster, both of which were undoubtedly Egyptian customs; as was also the practice of placing offerings of food for the dead.<sup>4</sup> Again, the customary *diet* of the Israelites in Egypt is given as fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic; all of which were commonly eaten there.<sup>5</sup> But as the Hebrew names of four out of the five vegetables do not occur elsewhere in the Bible, they could scarcely have been common in Canaan; while none of the characteristic productions of that land, such as honey, milk, butter, figs, raisins, almonds, and olives, are mentioned. The list is, as it ought to be, thoroughly Egyptian.

Next, as to the *Ten Plagues*. There is much local colouring here, and hardly one of them would have been suitable in Canaan. Moreover, their order of sequence is very remarkable. It is clear from the mention of stubble as still in the fields that the first interview of Moses with Pharaoh took place shortly after harvest-time. It is equally clear that the Exodus took place shortly before the commencement of harvest, the month Abib corresponding to our March and April.<sup>6</sup> Hence

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 5. 7, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. 12. 12; Num. 33. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Num. 11. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Gen. 37. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Deut. 11. 20; 26. 14; 27. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Exod. 5. 12; 13. 4.

the greater part of a year must have elapsed between these events, along which period the ten plagues have to be distributed. Observing now the order of these plagues, and comparing them with the natural calamities which still afflict Egypt, it is found that the two correspond in a remarkable manner.

(1.) The water being turned into blood probably refers to the discoloration of the Nile, which takes place annually about the end of June, though it is not generally sufficient to kill the fish or to render the water unfit to drink. (2.) Frogs are most troublesome in September. (3.) Lice very possibly may have been mosquitoes, which are often very annoying about October. (4.) Flies. (5.) Murrain among the cattle and (6.) boils very probably correspond to the diseases mentioned in the ancient papyri as occurring after the subsidence of the inundations, *i.e.*, about November or December. (7.) The particulars given in regard to the hail<sup>1</sup> fix its date about the end of February, when it still occurs in Egypt. (8.) Locusts are not confined to one season, but are known to have visited Egypt terribly in March, which seems the time intended, as the leaves were then young. (9.) The darkness which might be felt was probably due to the desert wind, which blows at intervals after the end of March, and sometimes brings with it such clouds of impalpable sand as to darken the atmosphere. The parallelism thus exhibited is most remarkable, and strongly suggestive of a contemporary origin. How easily a later writer might, by accidentally altering the order of the plagues, destroy this parallelism is shown in Ps. 77 and 105; neither list agrees with the Pentateuch, and as little do they agree with each other.

Lastly, the writer of the Pentateuch was evidently well acquainted with the old Egyptian *language*. Nearly all the Egyptian proper names mentioned are accurate transcriptions of Egyptian words into Hebrew. Similarly the writer often uses Egyptian nouns, or nouns common to both languages, several of them sometimes occurring in a single verse; *e.g.*,

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 9. 31.

*ark, papyrus, bitumen, pitch, flags, brink, and the river.*<sup>1</sup> And as many of these words are seldom, if ever, found in the Prophets when treating of Egyptian matters, we are justified in concluding that they are not only precisely such as a contemporary writer would have used, but are such as a non-contemporary writer would not have used.

On the whole, then, it is apparent that when Egyptian matters are touched upon in the Pentateuch, the most thorough familiarity with native customs, manners of life, seasons, and language is everywhere displayed, though in many cases these are strikingly dissimilar from those of Canaan.

It may also be mentioned that a large part of the *ritual worship* prescribed in the Pentateuch is obviously borrowed from that of Egypt. The most striking instance of this is, no doubt, that of the ark. A sacred ark is seen on Egyptian monuments centuries before the Exodus, and is sometimes shown as carried by poles resting on men's shoulders, and surmounted by winged figures something like the cherubim. Among other points most likely derived from Egypt are the mercy-seat; the structure, form, and division of the Tabernacle; the dress and regulations for the priests; the various kinds of embroidery; the overlaying the ark with gold; many of the ornaments of the sanctuary; and perhaps the Urim and Thummim. All this is additional evidence that the writer of the Pentateuch, whoever he was, knew Egypt remarkably well.

(c.) *The Deserticity of the narrative.*

A similar argument to the above, though from the nature of the case far less striking, is afforded by the description of the journey through the desert, which has been called the *deserticity* of the narrative. The wilderness and Mount Sinai appear to have been rarely visited by the later Israelites, so that the knowledge of them in the Pentateuch is evidence of its contemporary origin. And first as to the *camping-stations*. The names of nearly all these, probably chosen by the Israelites themselves, have long ceased to exist. But

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 2. 3.

many of them, especially between the Red Sea and Mount Sinai, have been almost unanimously identified from the brief description given of them. This could scarcely have been the case unless the writer had himself travelled along the route.

Next, as to the topography of *Mount Sinai*. The requirements of the narrative are both numerous and complicated, and are alone sufficient to identify the position. These are a wide extended plain (the Wâdy er-Râhâh), capable of accommodating a million of people; a lofty mountain (the Ras Sufsâfeh), within sight from every part, and apparently rising precipitously, or at all events so clearly distinguished from the plain that an order could be given not to touch it; the path of ascent by the side, within earshot, but yet out of sight of the camping-ground, so that any one coming down might hear a noise, but would not know the cause of it till he emerged just beneath the cliff; and a brook of water running down the mountain-side.<sup>1</sup> All these there must be; and all these there are at one place, and, as far as we know, at one place only. Moreover, the low line of mounds at the foot of the cliff exactly corresponds to the bounds beyond which the Israelites might not pass; and there is a little eminence in the plain very suited to the scene of the golden calf, which, being visible from a distance, was probably on an eminence. It is clear that no general knowledge of wilderness scenery could have suggested such a combination of correct details, and it is most improbable that tradition could have handed them down so accurately. The only natural explanation is that the narrator wrote from personal knowledge, both of the place and of the events which happened there.

Lastly, the *materials* used in the construction of the ark and the tabernacle are precisely such as the Israelites might have then employed. The ark, for instance, was not made of oak, or cedar, or fir, as would have been the case in Palestine, but of *acacia* (*shittim*), which is very common

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 19. 12; 32. 15-19; Deut. 9. 21.

near Sinai, though rarely used<sup>1</sup> in Palestine. And the other materials were goats' hair, rams' skins, sealskins from the adjoining gulfs of the Red Sea, and gold, silver, brass, and fine linen from the Egyptian spoils; the latter evidently so, as an Egyptian word is used.<sup>1</sup> There is no anachronism anywhere, such as a late writer would have fallen into.

This evidence in regard to the desert, remarkable as it is in itself, becomes still more so when combined with that in regard to Egypt. Here is a narrative concerned in its earlier part with events occurring in Egypt, and in its later part with events in the desert, and showing in regard to both a precise and thorough acquaintance with the country in question. To know either of these countries as this narrator knew them was an unlikely accomplishment for any Israelite in later years; to know them both would be far more unlikely. Moreover, the evidence is never introduced ostentatiously, or as if the writer wished to display his knowledge, but it drops out incidentally in the course of the narrative, and in the most natural manner possible. It is thus both cumulative and undesigned in the fullest sense. And we must therefore conclude that the writer was a contemporary who lived first in Egypt, and then journeyed through the desert; for on this hypothesis alone is everything plain and straightforward.

(d.) *The comparative study of the narrative.*

We have next to compare the various narratives of the Pentateuch with each other to see what evidence this affords as to their date. And we will consider in turn the discrepancies and the undesigned agreements.

(1.) *Discrepancies.*—First, it must be noticed that there are various small discrepancies between different parts of the Pentateuch, especially when comparing Deuteronomy with the other books. And these, it is said, point to the unhistorical character of the events, and therefore to a late date for the book. But this inference does not follow; for the probability of there being some divergence, if not contra-

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 25. 1-10.

diction, between two independent *contemporary* records of the same event is notorious; and this is true to some extent if the same writer refers on different occasions to an event he has witnessed. On each occasion the standard before him is not any former account he has given, but his own personal recollection; while to make his various narratives seem accordant is a most unlikely thing for him to trouble about. His aim is simply to set forth a true account of the event on each occasion, in such a manner as best to further the particular end in view.

Now, in the case of a *later* writer all this is different. His knowledge is necessarily but slight, and his first account is likely to contain all he knows. Moreover, if we assume that he invented the history, instead of merely recording it, it is almost certain that when he referred to the same event a second time, he would take care not to contradict his former account. So far, then, from slight discrepancies being an argument against the genuineness of a book, they are often just the opposite; and therefore we need not consider them in detail. But it may be pointed out that several of the so-called discrepancies rest on assumptions for which the writer is in no way responsible. For instance, it is sometimes urged that the three narratives of the patriarch's deceit are merely divergent and contradictory accounts of some one original story.<sup>1</sup> But this assumes that they are not what they profess to be, the records of three distinct though somewhat similar historical events.

(2.) *Undesigned coincidences*.—On the other hand, it is important to notice that the references in the Pentateuch to the same subject are, as a rule, not only in perfect agreement, but that the points of agreement are often of an incidental and unobtrusive character. These are what are called the *Undesigned Coincidences*. And as we shall have occasion to refer to similar coincidences in other parts of the Bible, the kind of argument they afford must be carefully considered, more especially as its importance is not obvious at first sight.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 12. 13; 20. 2; 26. 7

Now, if we find two statements which, though not identical, are yet perfectly consistent, this agreement must be either *accidental* or *not accidental*. An agreement which is too minute in detail to be accidental we will call a *coincidence*, and this of necessity implies that the statements are somehow connected together. If the alleged events are true, this connection may, though it need not, lie between *the facts themselves*, each writer having independent knowledge of these; and hence their statements being in perfect though unintentional agreement. But if the alleged events are not true, then this connection must lie between *the writers*, either one of them making his account harmonise with the other, or else both deriving their information from a common source. In the former case, there would be intentional agreement between the writers; in the latter case, between the various parts of the original account. In any case, there would be designed agreement somewhere; for, to put it shortly, the events, being imaginary, would not fit together of necessity nor by accident, which is excluded, and hence must do so by design.

This has been otherwise expressed by saying that truth is necessarily consistent, but falsehood is not so; and therefore, while consistency in truth may be undesigned, consistency in falsehood can only result from design. And from this it follows that an *undesigned coincidence* between two statements—provided of course we are fully convinced that it is a coincidence, and that it is undesigned—is a sure sign of truthfulness. It shows, moreover, that both writers possessed independent knowledge of the event, and were both telling the truth.

And the same argument applies if the two statements are made by the same writer, though in this case there is a greater presumption that the agreement is not undesigned. And it should be noticed that the more indirect and unobtrusive is the agreement so much the stronger is the argument, while the more obvious the agreement the weaker the argument; and in the extreme case where the statements are identical it is worth very little. For if we know nothing about the

writers, it is almost impossible to say that the agreement was undesigned. Indeed, the inference would be the other way, *i.e.*, that one writer copied from the other, or both from a common source.

Having now explained the great value of undesigned coincidences, we will consider a single example in detail, and select the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.<sup>1</sup> Now Korah, we are told, was a Levite of the family of Kohath, and the other two were Reubenites; and from incidental notices which are not given here but in another part of the book, we learn the position of the *tents* of these men. The Kohathites were to the south of the central tabernacle, on an inner line of tents, while the Reubenites were also to the south, though on an outer line of tents.<sup>2</sup>

This explains how easy it was for the leaders to form a secret conspiracy against Moses, as they could consult together without passing through any other tribe. It explains how, when Moses was talking to Korah, he had to *send for* Dathan and Abiram. It explains how, later on, the *tents* of Dathan and Abiram are twice mentioned, while that of the leading conspirator, Korah, seems strangely omitted. It explains how the *families* of these two were destroyed, though no mention is made of that of Korah, since, as Moses was within speaking distance, the destruction must have been very limited, and was probably confined to the contiguous tents of Dathan and Abiram, who were brothers, and the schismatical tabernacle erected alongside. We may therefore conclude that Korah's *family* was not destroyed, since their tent, being on the inner line, was at some distance. And this accounts for the mention of Dathan and Abiram alone in Deut. 11. 6, as well as for what some have thought to be a discrepancy in Num. 26. 11, where we read that the children of Korah did not die. In fact, the position of these tents is the key to the narrative throughout, though we are left to discover it for ourselves.

Now, if written by a contemporary, all is plain. He would

<sup>1</sup> Num. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Num. 2. 10; 3. 29.



of course know the position of the tents, and of course assume that his readers did so too. But if the whole story is a late fiction, all this agreement in various places is, to say the least, remarkable. Can we imagine a writer of fiction *accidentally* arranging these details in different parts of his book, which fit together so perfectly? Or can we imagine him doing so *intentionally*, and yet never hinting at the agreement himself, but leaving it so unobtrusive that not one reader in a thousand ever discovers it. This single instance may be taken as a sample of over twenty others, though as a rule less striking, which have been noticed in the Pentateuch; and they certainly tend to show its accuracy.

(e.) *The apparent truthfulness of the narrative.*

And this is still further confirmed by the fact that the narratives, even to a casual reader, have an air of *truthfulness* about them. Of course, this can only be fully realised by reading them at length; and even then the evidence will appeal with different force to different minds. But it may be pointed out that the writer appears to be thoroughly *candid*. The characters assigned to the Jewish patriarchs are not such as would have been invented in later times. The general rule is for nations in later times to magnify their ancestors and make them out to be heroes, usually omitting what is mean in their characters; but here it is precisely the opposite. Abraham, for instance, is twice represented as guilty of deceitfulness and cowardice; Jacob's conduct towards both his brother Esau and his father Isaac is utterly despicable; while his sons, the founders of the twelve tribes, are, with the exception of Joseph, scarcely given a single virtue between them. So, again, the faithlessness of Moses, the idolatry of Aaron, and the profanity of his sons are all narrated with perfect candour.<sup>1</sup> In short, the human character of these patriarchs is shown throughout, and is thoroughly consistent throughout. None of them are given mythical attributes. And this is certainly not what we should expect had the Israelites in later days invented these

<sup>1</sup> Num. 20. 12; Exod. 32. 21; Lev. 10. 1.

stories. On the other hand, how true they are to human nature, where we frequently find great men guilty of such crimes, is self-evident.

But there is an important argument on the other side: it is said that many parts of the narrative are *incredible*. This does not of course refer to the miracles, since the occurrence of these is the very point in dispute; but it is said that many of the other events when carefully considered are practically impossible. We will select four examples of this kind of difficulty.

It is urged, then, that the *large number* of Israelites, 600,000 men, said to have come out of Egypt, could not have sprung from the seventy persons who went thither with Jacob in such a comparatively short time. But both the patriarchs and their descendants had large households of servants, all of whom were probably reckoned into the nation at the time of the Exodus, as indeed they were on many occasions. For instance, to take a single example, the rite of circumcision was established with Abraham *and his seed*; but yet we are told that all his servants had to be circumcised. They were evidently included in his household, just as much as his actual children.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, these dependants are obviously not included in the seventy persons of Gen. 46. 27, so this difficulty is removed at once.

Again, it is said that the *Exodus* could not have been accomplished in the rapid and orderly manner described, owing to the vast multitude of people. But the Israelites were in expectation of their release for nearly a year, during which time leave for their departure was several times actually given; while they had at least four days' notice of the final start.<sup>2</sup> All this, together with their organisation into tribes and families, with princes over each, reduces the difficulty to very small dimensions.

Once more, it is urged that this vast multitude could not have assembled, as it is frequently said they did, *at the door of the Tabernacle*. But here also their organisation under princes

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 17. 9-14.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 12. 3-6.

and heads of houses, and the representative position which these occupied, must be taken into account. Very likely only these representatives are referred to. Indeed, this is almost certain when we reflect that the writer, whoever he was and whenever he lived, could hardly have meant to state such an obvious absurdity as is implied in this objection.

A more important difficulty is that the wilderness of Sinai seems at present unable to *support* such a vast multitude, more especially in pasture for their flocks and herds. But there is little doubt that the gradual destruction of the timber has been the cause of this ; and we know that it was formerly far more productive, since long before the time of Moses the Egyptians repeatedly sent armies to try to conquer the country, but without success ; so it must have been occupied by a considerable population. None of these objections then are of great importance.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

We may now sum up the evidence in regard to the *historical* portions of the Pentateuch. The only passages which require or suggest a later date than the death of Moses are the list of Edomite kings, the last chapter of Deuteronomy, and a large number of short explanatory notes which do not carry with them any part of the context. On the other hand, the histories of the sojourn in Egypt and of the journey through the desert have very strong evidence of contemporary origin ; while the entire book has every appearance of being truthfully and candidly written. We must therefore regard the narrative from the time of Abraham onwards as in the main *contemporary history*. And in corroboration of this it may be mentioned that the Pentateuch has not come down to us as an isolated document, but as the first of a series of books collected in the Jewish Scriptures. And as the history of each of these presupposes the earlier ones, *e.g.*, Kings Samuel, Samuel Judges, &c., we should expect the Pentateuch, which stands at the head of the list, to go back to a remote antiquity. Of course, it may be all an elaborate fraud, but the inference is certainly the other way.

As to who the actual writer was is immaterial, though that

the greater part should have been written by or under the direction of *Moses* is the most probable view. And this is positively asserted in the book itself; for we read, "The Lord said unto Moses, *Write* this for a memorial in a book;" and again, "*Moses wrote* their goings out according to their journeys."<sup>1</sup> If, then, Moses did not write the accounts of these journeys, the work must be a deliberate forgery; but if he did, and if he incorporated the earlier narratives in his own work, thus accounting for slight differences in style, &c., all is plain.

And his authorship is confirmed by the fact that so little is said in praise of Moses himself. His faults are indeed narrated quite candidly, but nothing is said in admiration of the great leader's courage, ability, and character, till the closing verses of Deuteronomy. These were evidently written by some one else, and show what we might have expected had the earlier part been the work of any one except Moses. Nor is there anything surprising in his writing in the third person, for numbers of other writers—Cæsar, for instance—have done the same. Moreover, the Mosaic authorship was universally accepted not only by the Jews, but also by the Samaritans, who were their opponents as early as the fifth century B.C., and by the Mohammedans, who possibly had an independent tradition. And we may ask, is it likely, if Moses never wrote anything, that writings should be thus universally ascribed to him; and is it likely, if he did write anything, that it should not have been preserved?

Having now decided that the Pentateuch is a contemporary document, and probably-written by Moses, we need not insist at any length on its substantial *accuracy*. This is especially the case because much of the previous evidence proves not only its early date, but also its accuracy, which was often the reason for giving it an early date. And if this accuracy is discovered in the few cases where the narrative can be tested, it may be reasonably inferred in the many cases where it cannot be tested.

And it will have been noticed that this accuracy often

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 17. 14; Num. 33. 2.

extends to the passages in which *miracles* are described. It is thus impossible to think that the original account was non-miraculous, and that some later writer inserted all the miracles. On the contrary, the evidence shows the antiquity of both portions of the narrative, which are so intimately connected that they must stand or fall together. Moreover, the later history of the Jews afforded an additional safeguard against any Mosaic writings being tampered with in subsequent ages; for the division of the monarchy into the hostile kingdoms of Judah and Israel must have prevented any important alterations being made in earlier documents, which were revered by both alike. And therefore we are forced to conclude that the whole narrative, including its miracles, was written by a contemporary.

And hence it seems almost impossible to deny the miraculous character of some of the events recorded. Can we imagine, for instance, a contemporary writer describing the ten plagues, or the passage of the Red Sea, or the rebellion of Korah, if nothing of the kind had taken place? If true, the events must have been public, notorious, and well known at the time; and if untrue, no contemporary would have thought of inventing them. Nor is it conceivable that any legislator should have founded his laws, and based his exhortations, on miracles which all his hearers must have known to be untrue. And yet the wonders of the Exodus are alluded to all through the legislative parts of the Pentateuch, including even the Decalogue itself.

But, it may be said, granting that some such events occurred, may not a contemporary who was a strong partisan of the Israelites have magnified them, and given them more importance than they deserved? This is, of course, possible, and perhaps probable; but even if so, we cannot get rid of the miraculous element altogether. No amount of magnifying or dressing up ordinary history could make such a story as that of the Exodus. If the events occurred at all, they must have been miraculous; and this conclusion, be it observed, is not affected by our opinion as to the class of miraculous signs to which they belong. Whether they were evidential miracles

in the strict sense, or whether, as is more probable, they were only superhuman coincidences, their evidential value is almost the same. In either case they show plainly that the origin of the Jewish religion was attested by miraculous signs.

There is only one important argument on the other side, which is the entire absence of any *confirming* evidence from other sources. It may be fairly urged that, considering the immense number of the Israelites, and the wonders connected with their leaving Egypt, we might expect to find some allusions to them on Egyptian monuments. And some persons do expect to find such allusions, though up to the present I believe none have been discovered.

It must be remembered, however, that the argument from silence is proverbially unsound. Quite recently, discoveries have been made at Tel-el-Muskhuta which, though not referring to the Exodus itself, strikingly confirm the previous part of the narrative.<sup>1</sup> For this turns out to be Pithom, one of the cities built by the Israelites; and we now learn that it was probably founded by Rameses II., who has long been thought to be the Pharaoh who so oppressed them. It was a fortified store-city, and being close to the frontier, was evidently a place of military supplies. And nearly its whole extent is occupied by the treasure chambers, which are divided by strong brick walls; some of the bricks being made with straw, some with fragments of reed or stubble used instead, and some without any straw at all. And, unlike the usual Egyptian custom, the walls are found to have been built with mortar, which is expressly mentioned in Exodus. And we also find that while its religious name was Pithom, its civil name was Succoth; so that the Scripture narrative is confirmed and explained throughout.<sup>2</sup> And such discoveries show what little stress can be laid on the argument from silence.

Moreover, in regard to the Exodus, if the events were such as are recorded in the Pentateuch, the Egyptians must have been very much ashamed of themselves, and would be the last

<sup>1</sup> "Transactions of Victoria Institute," vol. xviii. p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 1. 11, 14; 5. 12; 12. 37.

persons to refer to them on their monuments. In all conflicts, especially in ancient times, it is the victors alone who care to narrate them; and here we have a minute, and, as we have shown, contemporary account written by the victors, *i.e.*, the Israelites.

Lastly, it must be remembered that the subsequent history of the Israelites does afford some corroborative evidence as to the miraculous deliverance from Egypt. For that event occupied a unique place in the feelings, writings, and religion of the Jews. Their religion was indeed based upon it, as it comes in the very forefront of the Decalogue.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, their most characteristic institution, the Passover, was directly associated with it, even in name; and it is hard to imagine how a ceremony of so striking a character and of such permanence could have been founded on mere fiction. Even, then, had the Pentateuch never been written, the subsequent writings and religion of the Israelites would have formed a strong, though indirect, argument in favour of some miraculous deliverance from Egypt.

This objection, then, is quite insufficient to invalidate the strong evidence of the Pentateuch; and we therefore conclude in this chapter that it seems probable that the origin of the Jewish religion was attested by miraculous signs.

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 20. 2

## CHAPTER XI

### THAT ITS LEGISLATION WAS OF DIVINE INSTITUTION

As the Laws of the Pentateuch are not anonymous, they must be either genuine or the deliberate forgeries of a later date.

(A.) THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

This is altogether in favour of their genuineness, as is shown by :

- (a.) Their subject-matter.
- (b.) Their phraseology.
- (c.) Their relation to the history.
- (d.) Their relation to one another.
- (e.) Their accompanying exhortations.

(B.) THE LATE-DATE THEORY.

- (a.) Its extreme improbability for many reasons.
- (b.) The Historical argument in its favour ; from (1.) silence of subsequent writers ; (2.) inconsistent practices ; and (3.) ignorance of the Law in later times.
- (c.) The Philosophical argument in its favour ; but this assumes the point in dispute.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

The Divine origin of the Laws.

WE pass on now to the *Legislative Portions* of the Pentateuch, which commence in the middle of Exodus, and occupy the greater part of the remaining books. As we shall see, they are closely connected with the accompanying Historical Portions, already considered, and it is only for convenience that we are treating them separately. They differ, however, from most of the narratives in one important respect. They are not *anonymous*, but claim to have originated in the time of Moses, and his authorship is at times strongly insisted on.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Deut. 1. 1 ; 31. 28.



If, then, these laws do not date from that time, they must be the deliberate inventions of a later age, ascribed to Moses because of the additional importance which his name would give them. And as this question of the *date* of the laws is one of the greatest importance in deciding on their Divine character, we must examine it at some length; first considering the internal evidence, which is altogether in favour of their genuineness, and then what can be said on behalf of the late-date theory.

(A.) THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

This, as we have said, is strongly in favour of the laws dating from the time of Moses. It may be divided under the following heads:—

(a.) *The subject-matter of the Laws.*

In the first place, a large number of the laws refer exclusively to the wilderness life of the Israelites. And it is hence, on *prima facie* grounds, probable that they originated in the days of Moses, since there would have been no motive for inventing them in later times. Among such laws may be mentioned those referring to the *Tabernacle* and its *furniture*.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that we have here no mere description of the Tabernacle, but a series of working directions for its construction; and if Moses received such instructions from God, that he should at once record them in the form in which they were given is most reasonable. And that to this should be added soon afterwards a precise account of their carrying out is equally so.<sup>2</sup> But at no later time is this *double* record of instructions and fulfilment at all probable. It is also worth noting that in the instructions the most important objects, such as the Ark and Mercy-seat, naturally come first. But when describing their carrying out, this order is reversed, and the Tabernacle comes first, as of course it would do in actual construction; in the same way that one would build a house before making the furniture. This, though only a trifle, is very suggestive of contemporary records.

Moreover, these laws cannot have been invented, as is

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 25-28.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 36-39.

sometimes alleged, merely as a pattern in erecting the Temple either of Solomon or of Zerubbabel ; for what need was there to go into the minutiae of curtains, loops, clasps, boards, tenons, sockets, bars, screens, hangings, pillars, hooks, fillets, and pins, if the end in view was an imaginary pattern for a stone temple ? Not only is all this given in detail twice over, but, on the other hand, some striking characteristics of both temples, such as the rows of chambers abutting on the house, and the many courts and entrances are omitted from the account of the Tabernacle, though they could easily have been introduced. Hence a late date for any of these chapters is most improbable.

A similar argument applies to the laws regarding the *camp* and *order of march* in the earlier chapters of Numbers. What could be the object of inventing such laws in later times, when, as far as we know, the Israelites never encamped or marched in this manner ? Moreover, had these been late inventions, the tribes would certainly have been grouped round the Tabernacle in the wilderness in the same order in which they were grouped round the Temple in Canaan. It seems to be the one idea which such an invention could have embodied. But there is no such parallelism ; so here also the hypothesis of a late date is most unlikely.

The same remark applies to the *consecration and duties of the Levites* in these same chapters. The consecration enjoined is that of the whole tribe, which necessarily could take place but once ; and nothing is said as to the consecration of individual Levites, which would be the important point in later times. So also as to the duties assigned to them : these refer, with the exception of the general one of assisting the priest, exclusively to wilderness life, and are concerned with the transit of the ark from place to place. Their subsequent duties, when these temporary ones would be over, are not even alluded to. And yet one would think that these permanent duties would be of most interest in later times.

Once more, as to the laws for the *division of Canaan* and the assignment of cities for particular purposes.<sup>1</sup> Such laws

<sup>1</sup> Num. 26. 52-56 ; 34 ; 35.

were only needed before the tribes were settled, and they naturally contained frequent allusions to Canaan as not yet conquered. Subsequently the detailed account in Joshua 13-21 would take away any necessity for their record. All these groups of laws, then, amounting altogether to some fifteen chapters, are shown by their subject-matter to be either contemporary, or else not only very clever, but apparently very *useless* frauds.

Before passing on, it may be noticed that the subject-matter of many of the other laws, though applicable to Canaan, is strongly suggestive of an early date; for the laws are of a *restrictive* and vexatious character. They interfere with the ordinary every-day occupations of the people, placing some restriction on hunting, ploughing, sowing, reaping, acquiring land, bread-making, and several less important matters.<sup>1</sup> And can we imagine the Jews submitting to all this unless they honestly believed the laws to have been divinely revealed to Moses? Or can we imagine their believing this if, as a matter of fact, they had only just been invented, and were unknown to their forefathers?

Take, for instance, the restriction on *acquiring land*. Here the law was, that whoever bought an estate was to restore it to its original owner in the year of Jubilee, the price gradually decreasing according to the nearness of this year. How difficult it must have been to first introduce such a law as this! It would have revolutionised the whole community; for some men would suddenly lose their possessions, and others be as suddenly restored to theirs. We are not, of course, denying that such a law might have been promulgated at any time, or that men like David and Ezra might have had sufficient influence to get it observed. What we are denying is that they, or any one else, would have ventured to frame such a law, and yet assert that it had been in existence for centuries, though no one had ever heard of it,

And much the same applies to the laws regarding the *Levites*.<sup>2</sup> They, it will be remembered, had no separate terri-

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 17. 13; 19. 9, 23; 25. 13; Num. 15. 20; Deut. 22. 6-11.

<sup>2</sup> Num. 35; Josh. 21.

tory like the other tribes, but were given forty-eight special towns. And it is scarcely conceivable that such a curious arrangement could have been made at any time except that of the conquest; still less that it could have been made centuries afterwards, and yet referred to Moses. For not only would the inhabitants of the towns concerned have objected, but the territory before occupied by the Levites would have shown some trace of its former inhabitants. In short, these laws are not such as could have been invented in later times, and yet ascribed to Moses, without every one at once declaring them to be spurious.

(b.) *The phraseology of the Laws.*

This also is strongly in favour of a Mosaic origin. To begin with, as many as fifteen different laws or sets of laws, which have special reference to Canaan, are introduced with some such phrase as *when ye be come into the land of Canaan*.<sup>1</sup> Now, this plainly supposes that the people were not there already. And it is a phrase which would soon have dropped out of the laws had they been merely handed on traditionally, and not written down.

Again, many of the laws refer to the *camp*, and sometimes to *tents*, in such a way as to imply that the whole life and worship of Israel was carried on in a camp.<sup>2</sup> All these laws were, with some necessary modifications, as binding in Canaan as in the wilderness; so there was no reason to refer to the camp here, except the most natural one that they were actually issued in the camp, and were consequently adapted in form to camp-life. And the fact that this temporary form is preserved in the laws, rather than the later permanent one, is strong evidence of their having been recorded by those who knew them only in their earlier form.

There are also frequent allusions to *Egyptian bondage*, which would be natural if the laws were recorded at a time when this was still familiar to the people. For instance, Jehovah

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 12. 25; 13. 11; Lev. 14. 34; 19. 23; 23. 10; 25. 2; Num. 15. 2, 18; 35. 10; Dent. 12. 1, 10, 29; 17. 14; 18. 9; 28. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Exod. 29. 14; Lev. 4. 12; 6. 11; 13. 46; 14. 3, 8; 16. 26; 17. 3; Num. 5. 2; 19. 3, 14.

is very frequently described as the God who brought the people out of the land of Egypt, as if this signal deliverance was still fresh in their memory.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the fact of the Israelites having been servants and strangers in Egypt is often urged as a reason for kindness to those who might be servants or strangers among themselves.<sup>2</sup> But was it likely in subsequent times that their servitude would have been so remembered as to make it a safe basis for laws of kindness? And of what generation but that of the Exodus could it be said that they knew the heart of a stranger, seeing they had been strangers in the land of Egypt? Similarly we find, especially in Deuteronomy, allusions to incidents in the *wilderness* bound up with the laws, and generally as reasons for their observance.<sup>3</sup> How natural such allusions would be in the work of a contemporary is self-evident; but would they have had importance enough in the eye of distant generations to be worth weaving into invented laws?

Again, the manner in which the priests are *individualised* in Leviticus and Numbers is scarcely explicable except by their contemporary date. In later times the terms *Aaron* and *Aaron's sons* would in the laws (though not of course in the history) have been changed into *high priest* and *priest*, which were then what the terms meant. It is true that the title *sons of Aaron* was still sometimes used, but only in a general sense, and it always included both high priest and priest. In the Pentateuch it is not so; it refers to the priests alone, and when the high priest is included, the expression is altered to *Aaron and his sons*. It is scarcely possible to suppose that such titles could have originated or continued in use after Aaron's death; and it is to be observed that they do not occur in the later laws of Numbers and Deuteronomy. The following are instances of thus individualising Aaron and his sons.<sup>4</sup> The former passage, referring to the

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 11. 45; 19. 36; 22. 33; 25. 38, 42, 55; Deut. 4. 20; 5. 15; 13. 5, 10; 15. 15; 20. 1; 24. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 22. 21; 23. 9; Lev. 19. 34; Deut. 10. 19; 16. 12; 24. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Lev. 23. 43; Deut. 4. 15; 23. 4; 24. 9; 25. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Lev. 16. 2, 32; 24. 3; Num. 4. 16, 28, 33; 8. 2, 11; 19. 4.

day of atonement, deserves special mention. It is addressed through Moses to Aaron, who is described, not as Aaron the priest or high priest, but as *Aaron thy brother*; while a clause is subsequently added to make the law applicable in future times. Could any one but a contemporary of Aaron, either real or pretended, have so written?

We have now examined the *phraseology* of the laws sufficiently to see that they bear unmistakable signs of contemporary origin. Of course, these signs may have been inserted at a later time to give subsequent laws a Mosaic air, but they cannot be explained on any other hypothesis. And herein lies the great value of this branch of the evidence. It inexorably narrows the controversy to these two alternatives: either the laws are contemporary, or they are deliberate frauds. No traditional transmission, no innocent mistake in ascribing an old law to Moses, can explain such language; either it is the natural result of the contemporary position of the writer, or it was adopted with the express purpose to mislead.

(c.) *The relation of the Laws to the history.*

It will next be noticed that the laws are not systematically arranged, but are closely interwoven with the narrative. To begin with, as many as fourteen of them are actually *dated* either as to time or place, so that even apart from their position in the narrative, their chronological sequence is distinctly set forth. For instance, to quote but one example, "The Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying," &c.<sup>1</sup>

Again, several of the laws are linked to and immediately follow the particular incidents in the history which led to their enactment.<sup>2</sup> And at times these incidents are of such a trifling nature, like that of the man gathering sticks on the Sabbath, that it is hard to imagine their being invented in

<sup>1</sup> Num. 9. 1; Exod. 12. 1; Lev. 7. 38; 16. 1; 25. 1; 26. 46; 27. 34; Num. 1. 1; 3. 14; 33. 50; 35. 1; Deut. 1. 3; 4. 46; 29. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 13. 1; Lev. 24. 15; Num. 9. 10; 15. 35; 27. 8; 36. 8; and probably Lev. 10. 9.

later days. They look just like little difficulties which would be sure to occur when carrying out a new code of laws, and which are naturally disposed of as they arise. Elsewhere we are told, often at great length, what the people did in consequence of the laws; so that a considerable part of the history here depends on the laws, just as in the previous case the laws depended on the history.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, not only is the delivery of the laws to Moses or Aaron recorded, but frequently their *publication* also, either in detail,<sup>2</sup> or more commonly by some concluding statement.<sup>3</sup>

From all this it is clear that many of the laws of the Pentateuch are closely interwoven with the narrative. Now, had they been the work of late writers, this is the last thing we should have expected; the natural form for such writers to adopt being either isolated commands or systematic codes. And even laws handed down by tradition would in time lose all trace of the particular circumstances in which they had originated. A contemporary, on the other hand, would naturally record the laws in connection with the events which gave rise to them, and at the times and places of their original promulgation; and this is precisely what we find in the Pentateuch. It shows, not a complete legislation, but one *in process of growth*, and of growth in intimate connection with the accompanying history.

(d.) *The relation of the Laws to one another.*

Now, the laws profess to have been delivered mainly at two periods—near the beginning, and at the end, of the forty years' wanderings. And it will be seen the difference between the two sets of laws exactly corresponds to such a difference in date. We will first consider the laws *distinctive* of each group, and then those which belong to both, with some *divergence*, or even *contradiction*, between them.

And first, as to the *distinctive laws*. Among the laws peculiar to the *earlier* group are, as we have seen, those referring to the Tabernacle, the camp, the temporary duties of the Levites,

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Exod. 36-39; Lev. 8; 9; Num. 1; 3.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 12. 21; 35. 1, 4, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. 24. 3; 34. 32; Lev. 21. 24; 23. 44; Num. 9. 4; 29. 40; 34. 13.

and the personal references to Aaron and his sons. All these are obviously suitable here, but would be unsuitable at the later time, when the Israelites were just about to enter Canaan. Other omissions in the second group are easily explained by the fact that Deuteronomy was addressed to the laity only; while, moreover, if genuine, both speaker and audience must have known the previous legislation, which was in daily use, so there was no need to refer to every item of it.

On the other hand, the laws as to the possession and division of Canaan, and most of the references to desert incidents, belong only to the *later* group. Among other additions are the laws referring to the possession of land and houses, which were plainly not wanted before; and those referring to apostasy among the Israelites, and the admission of foreigners to the congregation, both of which might be required when the nation became settled in Canaan. Again, the absence of Moses, who had up till now been both judge, ruler, and prophet, would require careful regulation as to the appointment of his successors, which are fully given. There are also laws as to wars, sieges, and treatment of captives, all referring to regions outside Canaan, which in time the Israelites might hope to conquer.<sup>1</sup>

The distinctive laws, then, are very much what we should expect if the two groups date respectively from the periods they profess to do.

We pass on now to the *divergent laws*. The chief of these are the Decalogue, the laws concerning clean and unclean animals, the release of servants, and the Passover. With regard to the *Decalogue*,<sup>2</sup> there are several slight alterations in the later passage, which seem to be due to some remarks of the speaker, Moses, being interwoven with the original commands. Now the question arises, who was most likely thus to treat the Decalogue—Moses, through whom it had been originally delivered from Sinai, or some later writer? Could anything be more natural than that Moses, recounting some forty years afterwards that great scene to the people, should

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 16-25.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 20; Deut. 5.



here and there have mingled a word of exhortation or remark, or should at times have amplified a little or curtailed a little? He did not profess to be legislating then, but was merely reminding the people of laws which had already been given them. But now turn to the other view. Whether we assign the two versions to the same or different authors, and to whatever age, it is clear that nothing could be gained by these trivial variations. But if they were not made on purpose, they must be due to carelessness, which is almost as improbable. For a late writer who was anxious to pass for Moses would clearly be most careful what version of the Decalogue he quotes as the words of Moses. This divergence, then, so far from presenting a difficulty, is rather an evidence of contemporary date.

Next, as to the list of *clean and unclean animals*.<sup>1</sup> The differences here are that Leviticus includes among clean animals four kinds of locusts, and among unclean animals eight creeping things, such as the weasel, mouse, and lizard, all of which Deuteronomy omits. On the other hand, the latter mentions some clean animals, such as the ox, sheep, and hart, which the former omits. Plainly, then, when Leviticus was written there was a lack of animal food, which might tempt the people to eat locusts (permitted), or even mice and lizards (forbidden); while when Deuteronomy was written animal food was plentiful, and regulations as to these were wholly unnecessary. So here again the differences in the laws correspond precisely to the different conditions of the people at the two periods.

And exactly the same applies to the *release of servants*.<sup>2</sup> The divergence here is that Deuteronomy adds that the servant on going away should be furnished with provisions. That such a clause would be most suitable in Canaan is obvious, while that it would be most unsuitable in the wilderness, where the chief food was the manna free to all, is equally so. Similarly in regard to the *Passover*.<sup>3</sup> The divergence here is that Deuteronomy adds that on the following morning the people

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 11; Deut. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 21. 2; Deut. 15. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. 12; Deut. 16. 7.

should return to their tents. Obviously such a rule was unnecessary in the wilderness, where the people, being close round the Tabernacle, would doubtless go home the same evening; but in Canaan, where many would have come a long distance, it was desirable to state when they might return.

With regard, then, to these divergent laws, we have once more the same two alternatives to choose from, and no other. Either the small differences result from the fact that they date respectively from the times they profess, when all is plain and consistent, or else they must be due to the carefully planned work of some late impostor; in which case, while we admire the skill with which the fraud is executed, we cannot help wondering at its utter uselessness. What possible object could there have been in all this elaborate deception?

Lastly, as to the *conflicting laws*. There are a few cases where the laws are not only divergent but actually in conflict. The only three of any importance are those regarding the priests and Levites, the slaughter of animals for food, and the subject of tithes.

The first is doubtless the most important. In Leviticus and Numbers the tribe of Levi is divided into two parts; the descendants of Aaron being *priests*, and forming the highest order of ministers, while the rest of the tribe are *Levites*, and form various lower orders. But in Deuteronomy, it is said, this distinction is unknown; the priests are never called sons of Aaron, but are called Levites; while on the other hand Levites are allowed to perform priestly duties.

In answer to this it must be noticed, that as Aaron was himself a descendant of Levi, all priests were, as a matter of fact, Levites. Their not being called so in the earlier laws, but rather sons of Aaron, is easily explained, and forms, as we have seen, a strong mark of genuineness. For most of these laws were issued in the interval between the selection of Aaron and his sons for priests and the consecration of the whole tribe of Levi.<sup>1</sup> And therefore their Aaronic rather than

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 8; Num. 8.

their Levitical descent is naturally emphasised. Nearly forty years afterwards, when the priests were merely the highest order of ministers, into which the whole tribe of Levi had then been split up, there is nothing remarkable in their being called *the priests, the Levites*. And it may be added that the prophet Malachi seems also to speak of the priests and the sons of Levi as if they were synonymous, though every one admits that the distinction existed in his day.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the writer of Deuteronomy was quite able to distinguish between the two where necessary. For instance, in 18. 1-8 the first two verses refer to the *whole tribe*, the next three to the *priests* alone, and the last three to the *Levites* alone.

The only divergence, then, that exists is that Deuteronomy seems to recognise that Levites might perform priestly duties. But, with the doubtful exception of the above three verses, there is not a single passage in which distinctively priestly duties are assigned to those distinctively called Levites. All that we find is, that where the whole tribe is referred to the various duties are named together.<sup>2</sup> But in cases of this sort it is only reasonable to assign each of the duties named to that part of the tribe to which it belongs.

Next, as to the *slaughter of animals*.<sup>3</sup> In Leviticus every ox, sheep, or goat intended for food was to be first brought to the Tabernacle as a kind of offering, and there killed. But in Deuteronomy those at a distance from the Sanctuary were to be allowed to kill and eat at home. The first obviously suits the circumstances of the desert, where every one was near the Tabernacle, and the latter those of Canaan, where some were near and many at a distance. Moreover, the language of Deuteronomy implies that up till then some such law as the Levitical one had been in force; for it begins in a permissive form (*If the place, &c.*), implying some previous prohibition of which the context says nothing. It also implies in the following verse that the gazelle and hart were not included in the prohibition, precisely as we find them not included in Leviticus. And it allows domestic animals killed

<sup>1</sup> Mal. 2. 1-8; 3. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Deut. 10. 8, 9; 18. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Lev. 17. 1-7; Deut. 12. 21, 22.

at a distance to be eaten, like the gazelle and hart, by both the unclean and clean. This implies that up till then, though wild animals were free to all, domestic animals could only be eaten by those who were ceremonially clean, obviously because they had first been offered at the Tabernacle, as prescribed in Leviticus.

With regard to *tithes*, there is an undoubted discrepancy, though even this seems partly explicable by the relative dates of the laws. In the earlier laws the tithe or tenth is assigned to the Levites, who in their turn give a tenth of it to the priests. But in Deuteronomy only a portion is assigned to the Levites, the rest being either consumed by the tithe-payer himself at a religious feast at the Sanctuary, or else given to the poor.<sup>1</sup> In either case it will be noticed the principle is the same. The tithe is claimed as belonging to God; though in Canaan, probably because it would be more than the Levites required, owing to their having special cities, &c., the rest is devoted to religious or charitable purposes.

We have now discussed these conflicting laws at some length, and their slight discrepancies can, as a rule, be explained by the different conditions to which they refer; and in any case, they are quite insufficient to raise more than a very slight presumption against both sets of laws being genuine. Indeed, the very fact of our being able to explain the discrepancies in some cases makes it probable that, were our knowledge more complete, we could explain them in all.

On the whole, then, it is obvious that the *comparative study* of the laws in the Pentateuch is distinctly in favour of each set dating from the time it professes to do; for, with trifling exceptions, on this hypothesis alone can their differences be accounted for. Indeed, we may ask why, on any other theory, was it necessary to invent two sets of laws at all? Surely one complete code would have been better from every point of view. The only motive, then, that impostors could have had in inventing a double code was to give the laws the air of genuineness. And if this was their object, it must be allowed that they have

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 27. 30-33; Num. 18. 20-32; Deut. 14. 22-29.

thoroughly succeeded, for the laws as we find them show almost every possible sign of contemporary date.

(e.) *The exhortations accompanying the Laws.*

In close connection with the laws are certain exhortations to their observance, which may be conveniently considered with them, since they evidently date from the same time.<sup>1</sup> These exhortations, like the laws, claim to be Mosaic, both by their headings and by their connection with the history; and there are the same two explanations of these claims, and no others. Either the exhortations are genuine and contemporaneously recorded, or else they are late and fraudulent. And, as with the laws, the internal evidence is entirely in favour of the former view.

In the first place, the *personality* both of the speaker and of his audience is strongly marked. For instance, he frequently refers to his own exclusion from Canaan,<sup>2</sup> and if really the utterance of Moses, nothing could be more natural than this; but in later times such repetitions could serve no purpose, except perhaps to make the fraud appear genuine. Also great stress is laid in several places on the people's *personal knowledge* of the events to which the speaker refers; e.g., "The Lord made not this covenant" (that at Horeb) "with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day."<sup>3</sup> Of course, only persons over thirty-nine years of age when Moses spoke would have been born before the Exodus; but these elders would probably have been the ones addressed by him, and most of them would remember the stirring events of their childhood. Similarly the people are reminded of the *diseases* they suffered from in Egypt, their memory of which is assumed in several places.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, this personal knowledge is appealed to in each case as a *special* reason for obedience. Plainly this would have had no force in later times; indeed, it would rather have furnished an excuse for not obeying the laws, since the people of

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Lev. 26; Deut. 1-11; 28-30.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 1. 37; 3. 26; 4. 21; 31. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 5. 3; see also 4. 3; 11. 2, 7; 29. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Deut. 7. 15; 28. 27, 60.

those days had no personal knowledge of the events referred to. The only purpose, then, which a late writer could have had in inserting these passages was to give his work an air of genuineness—that is to say, instead of being the earnest words of one really anxious to secure obedience, they must be regarded as the cool and deliberate fabrications of a writer whose main thought was how best to impose upon his readers; and the difficulty of so regarding them is certainly great.

It must next be noticed that the exhortations abound with references to Egypt, the Wilderness, and the future possession of Canaan. Now, was it likely that such references would have had any influence in later times? Fortunately we have abundant evidence on this point. The writings of the Prophets are chiefly of a hortatory character, and their date covers the whole period when, on the late-date theory, these exhortations were written. Moreover, their varied authorship and large extent—some ten times as large as these passages—make it certain that whatever could have really influenced the people would be appealed to in at least some of them.

But what do we find? In the Pentateuch the points most commonly alluded to as reasons for obeying the law are the oppression and deliverance from Egypt, the wonders of the Exodus, the hardships of the Wilderness, the frequent rebellions there, and the solemn law-giving at Horeb. In the Prophets such allusions are almost entirely absent, there not being more than about ten of them.<sup>1</sup> It is plain, then, that these references to the *past* are such as were distinctly not to be expected in exhortations of the times of the Prophets. They would have had no force and appropriateness then. On the other hand, how natural they were in the time of Moses is self-evident.

The other prominent feature in the exhortations of the Pentateuch are references to the *future* conquest of Canaan, and the state of things which would then ensue, with all its special dangers and temptations. The people are exhorted to observe the commandments in order that they may go in

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 10. 26; 11. 15; 63. 11; Jer. 2. 6; 11. 4; 32. 21; 34. 13; Ezek. 20; Micah, 6. 4; 7. 15.

and possess the land; they were not to be dismayed before their enemies; and when the land was conquered, they were to utterly destroy the inhabitants. The peculiarities of Canaan as to its climate and productions are also detailed, and contrasted with those of Egypt, evidently with a view to their being better understood. It is described, for instance, as a country of hills and valleys, and consequently of running brooks, and not like Egypt, where they had to water the land with their *feet*; a reference to the water-wheels which were so worked, and which were necessary for raising water in a flat country.<sup>1</sup> It is hardly necessary to remark that nothing similar to all this is found in the Prophets.

It is plain, then, that the exhortations of the Pentateuch are based on totally different grounds from those in the Prophets, and grounds which in later times could have had no real influence in inducing obedience. Here, again, the only possible explanation on the late-day theory is that these passages were introduced merely to give a Mosaic air to the exhortations. But this is even more unlikely here than elsewhere, because of their relative amount. If any one will look through the first eleven chapters of Deuteronomy, he will find that about seven-eighths is occupied with such points as we have alluded to. What possible object could there have been in later times in composing such elaborate fictions?

There is also one other important point in which the exhortations of the Pentateuch differ from those of the Prophets. The latter invariably speak in God's name, and such expressions as *Thus saith the Lord, Hear ye the word of the Lord*, are extremely frequent, occurring altogether over 800 times; but in the exhortations of the Pentateuch nothing of the kind is found. They are delivered by Moses in his own name, often with the simple words *I command thee*, which occur thirty times in Deuteronomy. This is utterly unparalleled in the Prophets. Now, if the addresses are genuine, all is plain. Forty years' sole leadership might well have induced Moses to adopt such a peremptory tone. But is it likely that a late

<sup>1</sup> Dent. 8. 7-10; 11. 10-12.

author, afraid of writing in his own name, would have adopted a style which was wholly without precedent in any writings of that time?

We have now completed this branch of the inquiry. We have examined the laws of the Pentateuch in a variety of aspects—as to their subject-matter, their phraseology, their relation to the history, their relation to one another, and their accompanying exhortations—and in every case with the same result. The phenomena they present are such as can only be naturally explained by their contemporary date; and in some cases the evidence is so strong that it is hard to conceive any hypothesis of a late date which can account for them. And it may be added, the whole of this evidence is of such a kind that the ordinary reader can judge of its value. Any one who likes to look out the texts for himself, or even a small proportion of them, can form an independent opinion as to how extremely improbable it is that laws *such as these* should have been invented in after times.

(B.) THE LATE-DATE THEORY.

We pass on now to the opposite theory. It is assumed that at various times in the later history of Israel some scribe or prophet, wishing to provide his people with better laws than they then possessed, composed some part of those now contained in the Pentateuch; but fearing that his own name would not prove of sufficient weight, he thought it wiser to adopt the venerable name of Moses.

(a.) *Its extreme improbability.*

Now, it is hard to over-estimate the great improbability of this theory. In the first place, it requires us to regard the authors of this legislation as men destitute of moral rectitude. No amount of so-called piety in the fraud can prevent it from being fraudulent, so that the writers must have been *deliberate impostors*, who, knowing that the laws they invented were not Mosaic, yet falsely asserted that they were. Nor is the difficulty got over by saying that though none of the laws are Mosaic, yet they date from very different times; and perhaps the last compiler, who may have lived at the time of the Exile, did not invent any laws himself, but merely



codified and arranged previous ones. But shifting the difficulty does not remove it. Each individual law, if it falsely claims to be Mosaic, must have been invented at some time; and spreading the origin of the laws over several centuries merely requires us to assume a large number of impostors instead of one.

Practically, then, there are but two theories to choose from—that of genuine Mosaic laws and that of deliberate forgeries. And bearing this in mind, we must ask, is it likely, or even credible, that men with such a passion for truth and righteousness as the Hebrew prophets should have spent their time in composing such forgeries, especially when the very object of many of these laws was to inculcate moral virtues? For instance, can we imagine any one forbidding *lying*, and then condemning himself by falsely ascribing the prohibition to Moses? Or can we imagine any one declaring that God had forbidden any additions being made to the laws, if he had himself just been adding to them?<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, they must have been not only deliberate but *skilful* impostors; for, as we have seen, the laws exhibit the most varied and complicated marks of genuineness. And these are often so indirect and unobtrusive that they would not have occurred to any but the most accomplished forgers. This theory, therefore, while it destroys the moral character of the writers in a way which seems incredible, magnifies their mental character to an extent which seems equally so.

Thirdly, they must have been *successful* impostors, for it is undisputed that these supposed frauds were not detected at the time. And this is the more remarkable, partly because many of the laws were of a public and restrictive character, and partly because the people were for centuries divided into the hostile kingdoms of Judah and Israel, both of which alike accepted the laws. And we must further assume that the truth never leaked out afterwards, as they have been universally ascribed to Moses by the Jews.

Fourthly, the improbability of all this is still further in-

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 19. 11; Deut. 4. 2; 12. 32.

creased by the fact that many of the laws would have been utterly *useless* at a late period. They concerned the wilderness life of the Israelites, and would have been of no more use after the people settled in Canaan than laws concerning the Heptarchy would be at present.

But even this is not all. For, lastly, we must ask, was there any need to resort to *fraud*, even in regard to the useful laws? Why should not their authors have issued them on their own authority, instead of ascribing them to Moses? Now, if they were such men as David, Ezekiel, Ezra, or Nehemiah, they certainly might, and probably would, have done so; for at all these periods contemporary legislation appears to have been well known and readily accepted.<sup>1</sup> So that any writer of sufficient influence to obtain credence to such a fraud would most likely have gained his end equally well without it.

Thus, on whichever side we regard it, this hypothesis of a late date is most improbable. It assumes not only that the authors of the laws were deliberate, skilful, and successful impostors, but that they were impostors without apparently any object in being so, since many of the laws they invented were quite useless at that time, while the remainder could equally well have been issued on their own authority. What reason is there, then, for adopting such a view? The answer is to be found in certain considerations external to the Pentateuch, which may be conveniently called the Historical and the Philosophical arguments.

(b.) *The Historical argument.*

The first is, that for some centuries the laws of the Pentateuch appear to have been unknown, and cannot therefore have existed. The evidence adduced in support of this is the *silence* of early writers as to these laws, the existence of practices *inconsistent* with them, and the *ignorance* of their contents shown by those who ought to have known them well. And it need hardly be pointed out that if any one denies the genuineness of the other Old Testament books, this objection falls to the ground; for then we have no trustworthy

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, 2 Chron. 35. 15; Ezek. 40-48; Neh. 10. 32-39.

knowledge of the times in question, and cannot say whether these laws were in existence or not.

(1.) *Alleged silence as to the laws.*—In considering this argument, we will first take the historical and then the prophetic books; and it will be seen that none of them are really silent as to the laws, though they do not allude to them as often as some critics might think probable. The first of the *historical* books is Joshua; but this, though it expressly refers to the Mosaic laws,<sup>1</sup> cannot be appealed to as an independent witness, since many critics believe that it forms one work with the Pentateuch, so the two earliest books are Judges and 1 Samuel.

In *Judges* the references, though few, are very significant; more especially as the unsettled state of the country was not conducive to elaborate ritual laws being regularly observed. We learn that there was then a house of God at Shiloh; that there was a sacred ark, known as the ark of God's covenant; that Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, and therefore presumably the hereditary high priest, stood before it to *inquire of the Lord*, obviously as directed in Num. 27. 21; and that at least one feast was celebrated annually at Shiloh.<sup>2</sup>

The references in 1 *Samuel* are more numerous. We learn that the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which sitteth upon the cherubim, was usually in the Temple of the Lord at Shiloh, also called the house of the Lord and the tent of meeting, and that the lamp of God was burning there; that it was in charge of the sons of Eli, who appears to have been the hereditary high priest at this time; that the Israelites resorted yearly to Shiloh for sacrifice and worship, which points to the yearly presentation of tithes and firstlings; that this house was the place where sacrifices were generally offered; and that the sons of Eli offended God by their conduct in regard to the priest's portion, which implies that some different regulations, approved by God, had previously been in force. We also learn that the priesthood of Eli and the sacrifices they offered were of Divine appointment, and dated from the time of the Exodus; and that the duties of the

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Josh. 1. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Judges 18. 31; 20. 27, 28; 21. 19.

priests were to go up to the altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod ; and that they received all the offerings made by fire. We further learn that the priesthood continued in Eli's family for some generations, and continued to exercise the strange prerogative of inquiring of the Lord in important civil affairs ; that the Tabernacle was at Nob, with the holy bread ; that a large number of priests dwelt there ; and that, on a certain occasion, the Levites carried the ark of the Lord, which was one of their special duties.<sup>1</sup>

It must also be added that the evidence of the later historical books is frequently *retrospective*. For instance, the passage about Jehovah not having dwelt in a house, but in a tent or tabernacle since the time of the Exodus, implies that the Tabernacle had existed all through the period of the Judges. Again, Solomon would hardly have constructed his magnificent Temple as a copy of a desert tent, unless he had believed the original to have been revealed to Moses ; and how could he have believed this if no record of it existed ? Once more, we read that Hezekiah was most careful to keep the commandments *which the Lord commanded Moses*, clearly implying that a code of supposed Mosaic laws had long been in existence. So also the statement that such a Passover as Josiah's had not been celebrated in Israel or Judah since *the days of the Judges*, clearly implies that the rite had been in existence off and on all the time.<sup>2</sup>

We pass on now to the *Prophets*. Two of the earliest of these are Hosea and Amos, and they allude to the laws and ritual of the Pentateuch in several places, though they do not actually ascribe them to Moses. *Hosea*, for instance, speaks of feasts, new moons, sabbaths, solemn assemblies, and sacrifices ; he uses such technical terms as ephod and teraphim ; he warns the people against striving with the priest ; blames them for forgetting the law of their God ; and places mercy and the knowledge of God above sacrifice and burnt-offerings. Later on he blames them again for transgressing God's covenant and His law ; asserts that their wine-offerings and

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. 1. 3, 21, 24 ; 2. 12-30 ; 3. 3, 15 ; 4. 3, 4 ; 6. 15 ; 14. 3 ; 21. 4 ; 22. 11 ; 23. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. 7. 6 ; 2 Kings 18. 6 ; 23. 22.

sacrifices were not accepted in consequence ; and speaks of the people dwelling in tents as in the days of the solemn feast.<sup>1</sup> Similarly *Amos* blames the people for rejecting the law of the Lord and not keeping His statutes ; alludes to the vow of the Nazarites ; speaks of morning sacrifices, tithes, feasts, solemn assemblies, burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, peace-offerings, new moons, and sabbaths ; and specially mentions the use of leaven in sacrifices, which is not alluded to elsewhere than in the Pentateuch.<sup>2</sup>

All this is abundant evidence of the existence of some established law and ritual very similar to what we find in the Pentateuch. And though many of the references are of a disparaging nature, this does not affect our present argument. Indeed, the very fact that the prophets found it necessary to protest against ritual being placed above morality, shows not only that the ritual then existed, but that it was believed to have had a Divine origin, which they themselves imply in some cases. And it may be added, similar evidence is afforded by all the other prophets, only in the longer ones, like *Isaiah* and *Ezekiel*, it is proportionally stronger. The only counter-argument is afforded by the passage in *Jeremiah*, that God did not command the Israelites concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.<sup>3</sup> But the context certainly implies that it was placing these before obedience that God condemned, and the passage is anyhow quite insufficient to outweigh the mass of evidence on the other side.

Three concluding remarks may be made before leaving this objection. The first is to repeat the warning that the argument from silence cannot be relied upon. It would no doubt prove that many of the laws of the Pentateuch were unknown to the earlier historians and prophets, but it would equally prove that they were unknown to the later. For instance, *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* never once mention the striking ordinance of the Day of Atonement, though they must surely have known of it. Again, the Jewish custom of circumcision is never once

<sup>1</sup> Hos. 2. 11 ; 3. 4 ; 4. 4-6 ; 6. 6 ; 8. 1, 12, 13 ; 9. 4 ; 12. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Amos 2. 4, 11 ; 4. 4, 5 ; 5. 21-25 ; 8. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. 7. 22.

alluded to in most of the books of the Old Testament, though it was in existence all the time.

The second is, that the references to the laws which we do find in the earlier books, both prophetic and historical, are all *incidental*. The writers nowhere give a list of Mosaic laws; the allusions to them turn up, as it were, by accident, and only because the circumstances require it. And this makes it almost certain that many other Mosaic laws must have been equally well known without being alluded to at all.

The third remark refers to the common method of explaining away these references. It is by saying that they do not show the prior existence of the actual laws we now find in the Pentateuch, but merely that some such laws existed at the time. This is no doubt, strictly speaking, true. But considering the variety of references, and the fact that they are all explained by these Mosaic laws, it certainly seems more reasonable to assign them to this code rather than to some other and purely imaginary source. Moreover, it must be remembered we are not appealing to these references to show the prior existence of the Pentateuch. That, as we have seen, rests upon the strongest internal evidence. Only it is objected that the silence of history as to these laws for some centuries is a strong counter-argument. And *as an answer to this objection*, these references are so complete and decisive that it seems strange that it should ever have been made.

(2.) *Inconsistent practices*.—Next as to the inconsistent practices. The most important of these were sacrificial worship not being confined to the one central sanctuary, and the performance of priestly duties by laymen.

With regard to the former, the principle of both the earlier and later laws was that the place of sacrifice should be of Divine appointment, *where Jehovah had chosen to record His name*, and not selected by the worshippers themselves.<sup>1</sup> In Exodus it is naturally implied that there should be many such places, as the Israelites were then only beginning their wanderings; and in Deuteronomy that there should be only one,

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 20. 24; Deut. 12. 5.

as they were then about to settle in Canaan. Now, the ordinary manner in which this place was made known by the presence of the ark; wherever the ark was, there was the place chosen for Divine worship. It follows from this, that if at any time God chose to manifest His presence in other places, sacrifice might be offered there without infringing the law; for they would not, if limited to these occasions, endanger the general unity of national worship. This covers the sacrifices at Bochim, Ophrah, Zorah, and Araunah's threshing-floor, the last three of which were directly enjoined.<sup>1</sup>

It also follows that, in the absence of the ark as the mark of a divinely chosen site, no limitation existed as to the place of worship. This covers the ordinary worship at high places during the days of Samuel and Saul and the beginning of David's reign, when the ark was dissociated from national worship. Moreover, Samuel was acting under the same Divine authority as Moses, so his ordinances cannot be called infractions of the law. The law was merely in abeyance owing to the special circumstances of the time; but when these passed away, it again assumed its authority, and the sanctuary at Jerusalem claimed the same exclusive position as that at Shiloh. In later times, no doubt, the worship at high places tolerated by Asa and Jehoshaphat was an infraction of the law; but as this is mentioned as a sin, while Hezekiah and Josiah are commended for removing these places, it rather proves the existence of some law confining sacrificial worship to the one sanctuary.<sup>2</sup>

The other inconsistent practice can be easily explained. The only law which prohibited sacrifices being offered by *laymen* was that which forbade any but priests to minister at the sanctuary. Wherever, therefore, the special manifestations of God called for and justified sacrifices at other places, lay ministrations were not unlawful. This accounts for the cases of Gideon and Manoah. The vast majority of the other alleged instances are explicable upon the well-known rule that

<sup>1</sup> Judges 2. 5; 6. 26; 13. 16; 2 Sam. 24. 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 15. 14; 22. 43; 2 Kings 18. 4; 23. 8.

deeds done by subordinates are often ascribed to their superiors. Thus, at the dedication of the Temple, Solomon is said to have offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep, though they cannot have been offered with his own hands. Similarly when David and Solomon are said elsewhere to have offered sacrifices, we may fairly assume that they only provided and ordered them, the actual ministrants being doubtless priests. The other cases of Samuel and Elijah may be explained by the exceptional circumstances of their times, and the special authority under which they acted. Neither of these alleged inconsistent practices, then, affords more than very slight evidence as to the non-existence of the laws.

(3.) *Ignorance of the Law.*—We pass on now to the cases of ignorance of the law, the most important being those of Josiah and Ezekiel. As to *Josiah*,<sup>1</sup> he was plainly unfamiliar with the contents of the *Book of the Law*, probably Deuteronomy. But there is no hint that he was surprised at such a book being found, but only at such things being contained in it. To infer that the king knew nothing of a written Mosaic legislation, and that this was the first publication of the book in question, is quite unwarranted. The facts merely show that he had never before read these denunciations. Nor is there anything improbable in this; for he was a young king in the midst of a wicked city, and had just succeeded the wicked monarchs Manasseh and Amon, during whose long reigns most copies of the law had probably been destroyed.

The other case of alleged ignorance is that of *Ezekiel*, because in his ordinances for the new Temple he does not exactly reproduce the Levitical laws. But this is to ignore his position as an inspired prophet. As such, it was as competent for him to alter the laws of Moses as for Moses to enact them. Moreover, the difficulty is not removed by even assuming that the Levitical laws were later than the time of Ezekiel; for they are too much alike to have arisen independently; and therefore, on this view, the later writer was as much setting aside the authority of Ezekiel as, on the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 22.



other, Ezekiel can be said to have set aside that of Moses. And is it likely that an unknown author, who was afraid to write in his own name, would have thus ignored one of Israel's greatest prophets?

Lastly, the value, or rather worthlessness, of the argument from ignorance may be shown by an analogy. During the eighteenth century daily services were almost unknown in the parish churches of England. Now, would it be safe to argue from this that the clergy must have been ignorant of any rubric in the Prayer Book ordering such services, and that therefore it could not have existed? Certainly not; for, as a matter of fact, precisely such a rubric did exist, and in a prominent place, all the time. In short, apparent ignorance of a law is a very weak argument to show its non-existence.

We have now examined the *Historical* argument for a late date somewhat fully, under the three heads of silence, inconsistency, and ignorance; and in no case has the evidence adduced been such as to show that the laws were non-existent, but merely that they were often non-observed.

(c.) *The Philosophical argument.*

We have lastly to consider the other argument for a late date, which may be called the *Philosophical* one. It is urged that only by assigning the legislation of the Pentateuch to a series of late dates can it be explained in a reasonable manner. For example, the high and universal *morality* of many of the laws, which include even the thoughts of the heart, such as covetousness, cannot, it is said, be referred to the earliest period of Israel's history. For every other ancient religion developed in a regular course from crude to noble ideas of the Deity, and from an imperfect to a more perfect code of morals. And therefore, it is urged, Judaism must have done the same, so that all laws which show an exalted idea of God or a considerable advancement in morals cannot date from the very commencement. But this is plainly to beg the question whether Judaism does not differ from all other ancient religions in having been divinely revealed.

Again, it is urged that many of the laws were *unsuited* to the days of Moses, and referred to a long subsequent period.

For example, some of them are concerned with the conduct of the *king*; and yet the Israelites never had a king till centuries after Moses. And though any wise lawgiver might have guessed that the people would some day want a king, yet these particular laws seem directed against the luxury of Solomon's court. Thus the king's horses brought from Egypt, his numerous wives who turned away his heart, and his enormous treasures, are all plainly hinted at.<sup>1</sup> Again, the threatened dispersion of the Jews seems to anticipate still further the nation's history, and to look forward to the Babylonian captivity at least.<sup>2</sup>

Now, all this and similar legislation would have been quite useless in the days of Moses. It was not wanted till much later times, and therefore it is maintained that *for* these times it must have been written. And this is doubtless true. But to assume further that *in* or *after* these times it must have been written is once more to beg the question of its Divine origin. No doubt, if the legislation is entirely human, it cannot date from the time of Moses; for then we should have to attribute to him an amount of foresight as to the nation's future history which is incredible in any human lawgiver. But the legislation does not profess to be entirely human; on the contrary, its divine origin is an essential part of its claim. It does not ask to be received as a mere human code, but as a divinely revealed one. And against this claim the philosophical objection is powerless. We have only to regard the legislation in the aspect in which it regards itself, and all is reasonable and consistent.

Moreover, if, without assuming either the truth or falsehood of this claim, we base our verdict solely on scientific criticism, which is the line adopted in this essay, the result is perfectly plain. The verdict which criticism gives is unmistakably and unanimously in favour of the Mosaic date of the laws. We have examined their internal evidence under a variety of aspects, and always arrived at the same conclusion, that

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 17. 15-18; comp. 1 Kings 10. 26-11. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. 26; Deut. 28.

the laws date from the time of Moses. On the other hand, the late-date theory is extremely improbable on *prima facie* grounds; while of the two arguments in its favour, the Historical affords it very little support, and the Philosophical none at all, since it assumes the point in dispute.

We must, therefore, conclude that the laws date from the time of Moses. And if so, the further conclusion that they were then *written down* can scarcely be disputed; for the people coming from Egypt must have been well acquainted with literature, while the oral transmission of such complicated laws would have been most difficult. Moreover, several of them claim to have been written down at the time.<sup>1</sup> In short, we conclude that the *Laws* of the Pentateuch are thoroughly genuine. And as we came to a similar conclusion, though from quite a different kind of evidence, in regard to the *Histories* of the Pentateuch, it is clear that they mutually support each other.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

Under these circumstances we need not insist at any length on the *Divine Origin* of this legislation. That, as we have seen, appears to follow at once from its contemporary date. But there is an important objection still to be considered; it is, that the *minuteness* of many of these laws, especially those referring to ritual and sacrifice, makes it hard to believe that they were divinely revealed, more especially as many of them seem borrowed from Egypt. This is an undoubted difficulty. Of course, the common phrase *God said to Moses* need not imply any audible words, but merely that He secretly instructed Moses to write the laws. But still it seems to many to be most unlikely that God should, if we may use the expression, have troubled Himself about such trifles as are enjoined in Leviticus.

But with regard to this and other similar objections we have no adequate means of judging. It must be remembered that the rite of sacrifice with elaborate ritual was no peculiarity of Judaism. It was universal at the time of the

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 24. 4, 7; 34. 27; Deut. 31. 9, 24, 26.

Exodus, and we cannot say whether God might not have adapted this sacrificial ritual as a sort of *object-lesson* to teach the Jews some important truths about Himself, such as His justice combined with His mercy, and His abhorrence of sin. Indeed, that many of the laws are symbolical can scarcely be disputed; and such a method of teaching may have been, and probably was, far more suited to the then state of society than a philosophical treatise would have been.

Moreover, in the Pentateuch these ritual laws are never placed on an equality with the accompanying *moral* laws. The Decalogue itself is almost entirely moral in character; while the solemn warnings as to disobedience are, with one or two doubtful exceptions, all directed against moral offences.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Jews always in theory considered the ritual laws subordinate to the moral ones, and, as we have seen, were severely blamed by the prophets for not doing so in practice. And in this respect they formed a striking contrast with some other nations, where religious ritual was not only placed before morality, but was often mixed up with immorality.

But it is further urged that a great deal of the ritual is not even original. Much of it, as we saw in the last chapter, was borrowed from Egypt, while some customs were doubtless known to the ancestors of the Jews in even earlier times. But why should it have been original? Why may not certain portions of the previously known ritual in Egypt have been incorporated into the worship of the Jews, and given, as said above, a deep significant meaning? In other words, why may not God have used what He had Himself prepared the Israelites to accept by their long sojourn in Egypt? A wise lawgiver would certainly have adopted anything that was suitable in the customs already known to the people.

Moreover, it is important to notice that all this Egyptian ritual in the laws has another bearing. It affords a strong additional argument in favour of their early date; for it implies a lawgiver who knew Egypt remarkably well, and a

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Lev. 18. 26-30.

people who knew it almost as well, or they would not have so readily accepted the ritual. How very suitable this would be to the time of Moses, who was educated in Egypt, and to the Israelites, who had just come from there, scarcely needs pointing out; while, on the other hand, how unsuitable, if not impossible, it would be for a lawgiver centuries afterwards in Palestine is equally plain. It is also very remarkable that though the Egyptian theology was saturated with a belief in a future life of rewards and punishments, this finds no place in the Pentateuch. Its blessings and its warnings concern this life only; and however we may explain this, it shows that the Egyptian religion was not adopted wholesale by the Israelites. A very careful selection was made. Much that was bad was rejected, and, though it may seem strange to us, some good also. And this alone shows that the Jewish religion was no mere offshoot of the Egyptian, not to mention its other striking differences.

But in any case this objection is quite insufficient to outweigh the strong evidence on the other side; so we conclude in this chapter that the Jewish Legislation appears to have been of Divine institution.

## CHAPTER XII

### THAT ITS HISTORY WAS ATTESTED BY MIRACULOUS SIGNS

#### (A.) INTRODUCTION.

(1.) The Old Testament books briefly examined ; (2.) their alleged mistakes are quite unimportant ; while (3.) modern discoveries have on the whole confirmed their accuracy.

#### (B.) THE JEWISH MIRACLES.

List of ten public miracles ; a single example, Elijah's sacrifice, considered in detail ; and some general remarks.

#### (C.) THE JEWISH PROPHECIES.

(a.) Prophecies ; three examples considered — the desolation of Assyria and Babylonia, the degradation of Egypt, and the dispersion of the Jews.

(b.) Predictions. List of ten important predictions ; a single example, the destruction of Jerusalem, considered in detail ; and some general remarks.

(c.) Conclusion ; the cumulative nature of the evidence.

#### (A.) INTRODUCTION.

Having now examined the origin of the Jewish religion, and also its legislation, we have next to consider its *history*. This is the more important because it is asserted that for many centuries its history was attested by *miraculous signs*. And though at first sight this may seem most improbable, as the Israelites were only an unimportant tribe, yet it is not really so. For it is undeniable that their history, either real or supposed, has exerted a greater moral and religious influence on the world for the last thousand years than that of all the great nations of antiquity put together ; and it is equally undeniable that this influence has been on the whole for good. Millions of men have been helped to resist sin by the stories of David, Elijah, &c., over whom the histories

of Egypt and Assyria, Greece and Rome, have had no influence whatever ; so that, from this point of view, considering the permanent and world-wide influence of the Israelites, it is less unlikely that God should have interfered in their history than in that of any other nation. But have we any evidence that He actually did so ? Now, that the books of the Old Testament, from Joshua onwards, appear to contain such evidence is obvious ; so we will first offer a few remarks as to their *genuineness*, and then consider some of the miraculous signs they record.

(1.) *The Old Testament Books*.—Now, the main lines of argument for and against the genuineness of these books are similar to those we have already examined in regard to the Pentateuch, so need only be glanced at here. In *favour* of their genuineness we have first of all the universal tradition of the Jews, who, being the writers and custodians of these books, had the best possible means of knowing, and who revered them to such an extent that they could have had no doubt whatever as to their authenticity. Secondly, there are a variety of internal marks of genuineness, such as language, undesigned coincidences, and the minute and graphic manner in which several events are described. And though much of this evidence concerns the merest details, it is for this very reason less likely to have been invented in later times. Lastly, there is the moral argument : many of the books, especially the Prophets, are not anonymous, but claim to have been written by certain men and at certain times. And therefore, unless genuine, they must be deliberate and successful forgeries ; executed, moreover, by men whose one object seems to have been to inculcate moral virtues, such as truthfulness.

On the other hand, the arguments *against* their genuineness are the philosophical one, that it would seem to involve the occurrence of miraculous signs, which is supported by the historical one, derived from various slight inaccuracies, as well as differences in style and language. And, as with the case of the Pentateuch, the former appears to be the *reason* for discrediting the books, the latter merely the *excuse*.

We do not propose to examine any of these arguments in detail, more especially since critics who admit the genuineness of the Pentateuch generally admit that of the other Old Testament books. To put it shortly, the evidence in their favour is of the same kind, only, as a rule, stronger; while the argument against them is almost precisely the same, being chiefly the philosophical difficulty as to the occurrence of miracles.

(2.) *Their alleged mistakes.*—Before passing on, however, a few words may be said as to their alleged mistakes. Considering the long period covered, and the variety of subjects dealt with, and often the same subject by various writers, the number of even apparent discrepancies is not very great; and it is beyond dispute that many of these can be explained satisfactorily, and doubtless many others could be so were our knowledge more complete. Moreover, they are, as a rule, quite obvious, and have not been brought to light by recent discoveries, though these have often helped to explain them, so that their number will probably decrease as time goes on. And it must be added that an apparent mistake when explained is not merely removed, but often forms a strong argument in favour of genuineness.

It is also beyond dispute that most of the remaining mistakes are *numerical* ones, such as the discordant chronology in Kings and Chronicles, and the incredibly large numbers in some places.<sup>1</sup> But it is not impossible that these may be due to some copyist expressing the numbers in figures, instead of, as usual, in words; and the Hebrew figures, *i.e.*, the letters used as such, are very confusing. For instance, *beth* and *caph* mean 2 and 20, while *daleth* and *resh* mean 4 and 200, respectively; and yet they are very much alike even in print, as the English reader can see in the headings of Ps. 119, R.V. Of course, when used as letters the rest of the word shows which is intended, but when used as numbers there is no check. Moreover, a letter expressing a small number, such as 3, is converted into 3000 by merely adding two dots.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, 1 Sam. 6. 19; 2 Chron. 14. 8, 9.



But even allowing for all this, there still seem to be a few mistakes. These, however, are such as any good historian might make, and are quite insufficient to raise any general distrust in the books. They are mere *surface errors*, often depending on a single text or a single word, and are practically of no importance. Of course, if there were any *intentional* false statements in the Old Testament, or in any other book, it would destroy our confidence altogether; but I am not aware that any such are even alleged, except, of course, upon the rationalistic theory that many of the writings are late forgeries.

We will, therefore, only consider a single example, and select the one most commonly urged, that of the *antiquity of man*, though, strictly speaking, it belongs more to the Pentateuch than to the later books. Now, if we calculate back through the Bible to the time of Abraham, and then take the line of patriarchs,<sup>1</sup> and add up the age of each when his son was born, we arrive at the conclusion that Adam was created somewhere about 4000 B.C.; and though, if we take the figures given in the Septuagint or in the Samaritan version, we may add a few centuries to this, it does not alter the main conclusion that, according to Genesis, Adam did not live more than at most 8000 years ago. And yet it is practically certain from geology that man has existed on this earth for 20,000 years at least.

The discrepancy seems obvious, but what is its importance? Absolutely nothing. Were there additional patriarchs in Genesis, so that the time amounted to 20,000 years, no part of the Jewish religion would be at all affected. This seems the plainest and most direct answer. But it may also be pointed out that the chronology dates from the creation of *Adam* in Genesis 2, and not from that of the *human species* in Genesis 1; and as it is implied in several places that there were pre-Adamite races of men, these may correspond to the pre-historic men of science.<sup>2</sup> This inaccuracy, then, is of very little consequence, and yet it is undoubtedly one of the most

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 5; 11.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 4. 15-17; 6. 2-4.

important ; so we need not dwell any longer on these alleged mistakes.

(3.) *The effect of modern discoveries.*—We now come to a more important point, which is the bearing of modern discoveries in Egypt, Assyria, and elsewhere on the accuracy of the Old Testament. In the case of the Pentateuch, as we have seen, there is very little *direct* evidence either way ; but it is otherwise with regard to some of the later books.

Before considering this evidence in detail, there is one general point to be noticed which is very important. It is that modern discoveries have completely changed what we may call the *a priori* argument on the subject. It used to be thought that the Jews were a kind of half-savage nation, living at a time when civilisation was almost unknown, and when literary records could scarcely be expected. But we now know that it was precisely the opposite. The period of Jewish history from the time of Moses onwards was distinctly a literary age. In Egypt, Babylonia, Syria, and elsewhere it was the custom, and had been for centuries, to publicly chronicle all important events, at least all those that were creditable to the persons concerned. Large libraries, moreover, were formed in the more important towns, which included grammars and dictionaries ; and educated men appear to have known two or three languages at least. It is, then, almost certain that the Jews, like the surrounding nations, had their historians. In every age conquerors have loved to record their conquests, and why should the Jews alone have been an exception ?

But now comes the important point. The historical books in the Old Testament have no competitors. Any other histories there may have been have long since disappeared. If, then, we deny that these books are in the main a contemporary record, we must either assume that the Jews, unlike the surrounding nations, had no contemporary historians, which is most unlikely, or else that their works were superseded in later days by other and less reliable accounts which were universally mistaken for the originals, and so

got placed in the Jewish Canon; and this seems equally improbable.

We pass on now to the detailed evidence, and that this is on the whole strongly in favour of the truthfulness of the Old Testament cannot be disputed. Indeed, the argument on the other side may be dismissed at once. It rests chiefly on the fact that certain important events, such as the destruction of Sennacherib's army and the illness of Nebuchadnezzar, are not mentioned on the monuments of the kings concerned. But when we consider the almost invariable custom of early monarchs to record their victories alone, and not their defeats or disgraces, this is hardly to be wondered at. On the other hand, the fact that the Jewish historians do frequently record national misfortunes gives us a confidence in them which we do not feel in those who record nothing but victories.

Coming now to the evidence in favour of the Old Testament, much of it has no bearing on our present argument. The geography of Palestine, for instance, has been shown to be minutely accurate; but this might well be the case even though the books were written centuries after the events described, provided the writers were Jews who knew the country intimately. In other cases, however, there is a distinct inference in favour of the authenticity of the books, as a few examples will show.<sup>1</sup>

And first as to the captivity of *Manasseh*.<sup>2</sup> We read that the Assyrian king (Esarhaddon) carried Manasseh away captive, not to his own capital, Nineveh, but to Babylon, the capital of the rival empire, which his father Sennacherib had conquered and completely destroyed. This has long been a difficulty, but it is now explained; for we learn that Esarhaddon rebuilt the city, and endeavoured to win over the Babylonians by residing there half the year. A political prisoner, then, would be taken to one or the other, according to where the court happened to be at the time. But unless

<sup>1</sup> Sayce, "Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments," 1892, pp. 122, 111, 136, 158.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. 33. 11.

the writer of the Chronicles had authentic information, he is hardly likely to have guessed this, and would almost certainly have mentioned the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, instead.

Secondly, as to Isaiah's account of the *invasion of Jerusalem*.<sup>1</sup> Here also a long-felt difficulty has at length been cleared up. The prophet describes an Assyrian army as coming from the north-east, and after it had conquered Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, Arpad, Damascus, and Samaria, attacking and conquering Jerusalem. But yet till recently no such event was known, the nearest chronologically being the attack on Jerusalem by Sennacherib, which, however, was from the south-west, and was a failure. Some commentators were thus driven to the strange conclusion that Isaiah was describing an *ideal* attack on Jerusalem. But all is now plain. For it has been discovered that precisely such an attack was made by Sargon in B.C. 711, who captured all the towns specified, including Jerusalem itself. But again we may ask, is a late writer likely to have known all this ?

As a third example we will take Daniel's mention of *Belshazzar*. He states that the last king of Babylon was Nebuchadnezzar's son, called Belshazzar, who was slain when the city was captured (about B.C. 538). But according to Berosus, who, though he only wrote in the third century B.C., was till recently our chief authority, all this appears to be wrong. The last king of Babylon was a usurper called Nabonidus, who was not in the city at the time of its capture, and any such person as Belshazzar is quite unknown. And in this account Berosus was supported by the Persian and Greek historians ; and so matters remained till some cuneiform inscriptions were discovered in 1854.

From these it appears that while Nabonidus was what we might call emperor of the whole Babylonian empire, and retreated with his army before the invaders, he left his eldest son, who was named Belshazzar, and who was associated with him in the government, to defend the city of Babylon as best

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 10.

he could. And this seems to explain the latter's promise to make Daniel, not, as we should expect, the second, but the *third* ruler in the kingdom; Nabonidus and Belshazzar himself being the first and second.<sup>1</sup> And he was probably slain there, since an impostor, who afterwards claimed to be heir to the throne, did not take his name, but that of the second son of Nabonidus. We also learn from the inscriptions that the mother of Nabonidus was an important person, so she was very likely the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar; or possibly the usurper may have strengthened his claim by the common expedient of marrying a royal princess. In either case, Belshazzar would be a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar; and as the same word is used in Chaldee as in Hebrew for father and grandfather (see margin of A.V.), the whole of the apparent mistakes vanish.

But now to *reverse* the argument. Of course, if Daniel himself wrote the book, he would have known all about Belshazzar, no matter how soon afterwards it was forgotten. But, on the other hand, if the book was a forgery, written by a Jew in Palestine about B.C. 160, which is the rationalistic theory, how was it that he knew the name of Belshazzar at all, when such a king was unknown to previous historians? Plainly, then, this is a distinct argument in favour of the contemporary date of the book. It may be added that inscriptions recently discovered throw considerable doubt on the generally received account of the capture of the city by Cyrus; but this does not affect our present subject, since Daniel does not mention Cyrus in this chapter, but a certain Darius the Mede, who is not clearly identified.

We have now briefly indicated the reasons for thinking that the books of the Old Testament are on the whole authentic; that is to say, that they were in the main, and excluding disputed passages, written by the writers to whom they are usually ascribed. What, then, is the value of the evidence they afford as to the history of the Jews having been attested by miraculous signs? The most important of such signs are

<sup>1</sup> Dan. 5. 7.

*Miracles and Prophecies*; and we will consider some examples of each.

(B.) THE JEWISH MIRACLES.

And first as to the miracles, including under this term both superhuman coincidences and evidential miracles in the strict sense. They occur all through the historical books of the Old Testament; but as these cover nearly a thousand years, and presumably all important miracles are recorded, they were not of very frequent occurrence. Of course, they vary greatly in evidential value, the following being ten of the most important:—

The passage of the Jordan, Josh. 3. 14-17.

The capture of Jericho, Josh. 6. 6-20.

The "silence" of the sun and moon, Josh. 10. 12-14.

Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel, 1 Kings 18. 17-40.

The cure of Naaman's leprosy, 2 Kings 5. 10-27.

The destruction of Sennacherib's army, 2 Kings 19. 35.

The shadow on the dial, 2 Kings 20. 8-11.

King Uzziah's leprosy, 2 Chron. 26. 16-21.

The three men in the furnace, Dan. 3. 20-27.

Daniel in the lions' den, Dan. 6. 16-23.

We will examine a single instance in detail, and select *Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel*. This event is said to have occurred on the most public occasion possible, before the king of Israel and thousands of spectators, and its details are all perfectly consistent. Indeed, the only one that can be objected to turns out on investigation to be a distinct evidence of truthfulness. It refers to the quantity of water poured over the sacrifice, which, as the event is said to have occurred after three years of the most intense drought, needs explanation.<sup>1</sup> But when we remember that Carmel is close to the sea, all difficulty is at an end; it was doubtless sea-water that was used. But this agreement can scarcely have been accidental. And if the whole account is fiction, it is at least strange that the writer should have been aware of the seeming contradiction, and should have purposely placed the incident

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 18. 5.

close to the sea so as to explain it, and yet should not have hinted at this explanation himself, but have left his readers to discover it for themselves. The non-miraculous part of the story is thus perfectly consistent and trustworthy.

Passing on to the miracle, or rather *superhuman coincidence*, there is no difficulty whatever as to its causation. The lightning which struck the sacrifice was probably due to natural causes; and yet, as before explained, this would not at all interfere with its evidential value. There is thus no *mental* difficulty about it whatever. Neither is there any *moral* difficulty, for it was avowedly a test case to definitely settle whether Jehovah was the true God or not. The nation, we learn, both from Elijah's own statement and from incidental notices elsewhere, had long been halting between two opinions. Some were worshippers of the true God Jehovah, and others of the false god Baal, but the vast majority were in an undecided state. And these rival sacrifices were suggested for the express purpose of settling the point; and therefore, if miracles at all are credible, there could not have been a more appropriate occasion for one; while it was, for the time at least, thoroughly successful. All present were convinced that Jehovah was the true God, and, in accordance with the national law,<sup>1</sup> the false prophets of Baal were immediately put to death. And as they had themselves most likely murdered the prophets of Jehovah, and committed other crimes, they richly deserved their fate.

Now, is it conceivable that any writer would have recorded all this, even a century afterwards, if nothing of the kind had occurred? The event, if true, must have been notorious and well known for several generations; and if untrue, no one living near the time and place would have ventured to fabricate it. Moreover, the party of Baal continued to exist for some generations, and would certainly have contradicted and exposed the story if not authentic. And what renders the argument still stronger is that all this is stated to have

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 13.

occurred, not among savages, but among a fairly civilised nation and in a literary age.

We need not examine the other instances in detail, since the argument is much the same in every case. They are all said to have been *public* miracles, either actually performed before crowds of persons, or else so affecting public men that their truth or otherwise must have been notorious at the time. They were all of such a kind that any mistake or fraud as to their occurrence is out of the question; while they were not confined to one time or place, but occurred centuries apart, and affected such distant countries as Damascus, Assyria, and Babylon.

Moreover, none of them present any special difficulties either as to their causation or purpose. Most of them were only superhuman coincidences, and some of the remainder have been already examined in Chap. ix. And they were not mere useless marvels for persons to wonder at, but were meant to enforce some important truths about God, such as the reality of His promise to give the Israelites the land of Canaan, or His being the true God in opposition to the gods of other nations; and they all, or nearly all, occurred on very important occasions. It is, then, on the face of it, most unlikely that such miracles as these should have been described unless they were true. Indeed, if the Old Testament books were written by contemporaries, or even within a century of the events they relate, it seems almost impossible to deny their occurrence.

(C.) THE JEWISH PROPHECIES.

Superhuman knowledge of the future may be of two kinds, which, for the sake of clearness, we will call *Prophecy* and *Prediction*, though there is no sharp distinction between them, while in common language the former word may be conveniently used to include both. Strictly speaking, however, by a prophecy is meant a general knowledge of some future state, which is not very definite; while by a prediction is meant a special knowledge of some particular future event, which is definite.

(a.) *Prophecies.*

We will consider the prophecies first, excluding at present those referring to the Jewish Messiah (see Chap. xx.); and,



as we shall see, their agreement with history seems far too exact to be accidental, while in this case it is impossible to get over the difficulty by the favourite expedient of saying that they were written *after the event*. We will select for examination those concerning the Jews themselves, and their great neighbours Assyria and Babylonia, on the one hand, and Egypt on the other. And we have chosen these nations because their history and present state are well known, whereas the prophecies concerning other places, such as Petra and Idumæa, though equally striking, would require some special knowledge to appreciate their force.

Now, the great empires of Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt had existed for centuries, and there seems no reason why the Jewish writers should have pronounced any permanent doom on them at all, still less on their own people. But they did so, and with remarkable discrimination. The prophecies generally occur in continuation of those referring to some immediate destruction of these kingdoms; and though at times their meaning is a little obscure, it is on the whole too plain to be mistaken.

And first as to *Assyria and Babylonia*. The future of these countries was to be utter *desolation*. The kingdoms were to be destroyed, the land was to become a wilderness, and the cities to be entirely forsaken. It was not merely that the nations were to be dispossessed by others, which any one might have anticipated, but that the land was to remain permanently desolate. We read repeatedly that it was to be desolate *for ever*; and though this term cannot be pressed as meaning literally for all eternity, it certainly implies a long continuance.<sup>1</sup> A single passage referring to each may be quoted at length.

Zephaniah says of Assyria, "And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like the wilderness. And herds shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations; both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the chapiters

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 13. 19-22; 14. 22, 23; Jer. 50. 12, 13, 23, 39, 40; 51. 26, 37, 43; Nahum 3. 7; Zeph. 2. 13-15.

thereof:<sup>1</sup> their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he hath laid bare the cedar work. This is the joyous city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none else beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in!"

And Isaiah says of Babylon, "And Babylon, the glory of the kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldean's pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and satyrs [or goats] shall dance there. And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged."

It seems needless to comment on prophecies so plain and straightforward. Nor need we insist at any length on their exact fulfilment; it is obvious to every one. For two thousand years history has verified them. The utter desolation of these countries is without a parallel: the empires have vanished, the once populous land is deserted, and the cities are heaps of ruins. Nineveh is desolate. Babylon, in spite of the inexhaustible fertility of its territory and the natural advantages of its position, which nearly induced Alexander the Great to make it his capital,<sup>2</sup> is practically uninhabited. In short, the prophecies have been fulfilled in a manner which is, to say the least, very remarkable.

And next as to *Egypt*. The future foretold of this country is not so much desolation as *degradation*. Ezekiel tells us it is to become a base kingdom, and he adds, "It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it any more lift itself up above the nations: and I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations."<sup>3</sup> And here also prophecy has been turned into history. The permanent

<sup>1</sup> The capitals of the fallen columns lying among the ruins.

<sup>2</sup> Thirlwall's "History of Greece," vol. vi. p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> Ezek. 29. 15.

degradation of Egypt is a striking fact which cannot be disputed. When the prophets wrote, Egypt had on the whole been a powerful and independent kingdom for some thousands of years; but it has never been so since. 'Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Saracens, Memlooks, and Turks have in turn been its masters; but it has been the master of no one.' It has never more *ruled over the nations* as it used to do for so many centuries. Its history in this respect has been unique—an unparalleled period of prosperity followed by an unparalleled period of degradation.

With such an obvious fulfilment of the main prophecy, it seems needless to insist on any of its details, though some of these are sufficiently striking. Thus Ezekiel's description of Egypt as the *basest* of kingdoms seems specially appropriate to that country, which was once ruled by a dynasty of slaves (the Memlooks). Again, we read a few verses farther on, *Her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted*; and though it is doubtful to what period this refers, yet no more accurate description can be given of the present cities of Egypt, such as Cairo, than that they are in the midst of the cities that are wasted, such as Memphis, Bubastis, and Tanis. Again we read, *There shall be no more a prince out of the land of Egypt*; and yet, when this passage was written, there had been independent Egyptian sovereigns from the very dawn of history; but there have been none since.<sup>1</sup> Stress, however, is not laid on details like these, some of which are admittedly obscure, such as the forty years' desolation of the land with the scattering of its inhabitants,<sup>2</sup> but rather on the broad fact that Egypt was not to be *destroyed* like Assyria and Babylonia, but to be *degraded*, and that this has actually been its history.

Lastly, as to the *Jews*. Their future was to be neither destruction nor degradation, but *dispersion*. This is asserted over and over again. They were to be scattered among the nations, sifted among all nations, tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth, and scattered among all peoples from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. 30. 7, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. 29. 11-13; 30. 23, 26.

earth.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, dispersion was not foretold as the fate of other nations. The Egyptians, it is true, were to be scattered, but only for forty years; so that dispersion as a permanent state was to be the future of the Jews, and of them alone.

And here again history has exactly coincided with prophecy. The fate of the Jews has actually been dispersion, and this to an extent which is quite unique. First of all, the ten tribes were carried away to Nineveh and scattered among other nations; into which they were gradually absorbed, and thus destroyed. And the remaining tribes, though reinstated in their own country after the Babylonian captivity, were subsequently dispersed to an even greater extent when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, though, strange to say, not in this case losing their nationality. And so they have remained ever since. 'The Jews are still everywhere, though the Jewish nation is nowhere.' They are present in all countries, but with a home in none, having been literally *scattered among the nations*.

There is, however, this difficulty. Though dispersion is everywhere foretold as the fate of the Jews, yet the *details* mentioned are sometimes only applicable to the earlier dispersion, and sometimes only to the later. And these details are often so mixed together in the prophecies that it is not easy to separate them. Indeed, but for this we should have called them predictions, for the details, considered separately, have been most strikingly fulfilled either in the one case or in the other. But it is only fair to remember that dispersion is not foretold simply as a future event, but as a punishment on the Jews for their sins; and therefore different parts of the nation may have deserved it, and received it, at different times and with different details, though all are mixed together in the prophecy.

With regard to these details, three points are specially emphasised in Deut. 28, and they all refer to the later dispersion alone. The first is the terrible strictness of the previous *siege*, which forced the wretched inhabitants to cannibalism

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 26. 33; Deut. 4. 27; 28. 25, 64; Neh. 1. 8; Jer. 9. 16; Ezek. 6. 8; 22. 15; 23. 46; Amos 9. 9.

of the most revolting kind, mothers eating their own children.<sup>1</sup> And this, as we learn from Josephus, actually occurred during the Roman siege. It is true that it also occurred during the siege of Samaria, centuries before (2 Kings 6. 28); but as that was a complete failure, and ended in the triumph of the inhabitants, it can scarcely be the one intended. Josephus also mentions that after the Roman siege the number of Jews sold for slaves was so great that there was a difficulty in finding purchasers, and that many of them were sent to the mines in Egypt; both of which points seem alluded to in Deut. 28. 68.<sup>2</sup>

The second is the great and long-continued *sufferings* which the Jews were to undergo in their dispersion. They were to become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all people. Their curses were to be upon them for a sign and for a wonder, and upon their seed for ever. The plagues of themselves and of their seed were to be wonderful, even great plagues and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses and of long continuance. They were to find no ease nor rest for the sole of their foot, but were to have a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and pining of soul, and their life was to hang in doubt night and day.<sup>3</sup> And here again the event is as strange as the prophecy. Nowhere else shall we find a parallel to it. For centuries the Jews have been a scorn and reproach among other nations. They have, justly or unjustly, been subject to civil disabilities and fierce persecutions. They have been driven from kingdom to kingdom, and have lived in daily fear of their lives.

The third and most remarkable point is, that in spite of these long-continued sufferings the Jews were not to be destroyed or merged into other peoples, but were to remain *distinct*. Though the Jewish nation was to be dispersed, the units were to be carefully preserved. This is apparent from the previous texts. They and their seed *for ever* were to remain a separate people, a sign and a wonder at all times; or, to adopt the striking metaphor of Amos, they were to be

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 28. 53-57.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus, "Wars," vi. 3, 8, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 28. 37, 46, 59, 65, 66.

sifted among all nations, without a grain falling to the ground. And here also the prophecy reads more like history. For eighteen centuries the Jews have remained a separate though scattered people. They have retained their distinct religion, their distinct nationality, and their distinct characteristics; in short, they have not been merged into other nations, but, as said before, have been literally *scattered among them*. Of course, attempts have been made to account for this long isolation by ascribing it to their peculiar customs and avoidance of intermarriage. But even granting this, it does not weaken the prophecy. For the fact itself is what was prophesied, and this cannot be disputed. The causes which brought about this fact were not foretold, and they are immaterial.

Now, what conclusion can be drawn from all these prophecies, so clear in their general import, so distinctive in their character, so minute in many of their details, so unlikely at the time they were written, and yet one and all so exactly fulfilled? There seem to be only three alternatives to choose from. Either these prophecies must have been random *guesses*, which seems incredible; for such guesses do not, as a rule, come true. Or else they must have been due to deep *foresight* on the part of the writers, which seems equally incredible; for the writers had had no experience of the permanent desolation of great empires like Assyria and Babylonia, while as to the fate of Egypt and the Jews themselves history afforded no parallel. Or else, lastly, the writers must have had *revealed* to them what the future of these nations would be; in which case, and in which case alone, all is plain.

(b.) *Predictions.*

We pass on now to the predictions. These are found scattered all through the Old Testament, the following being ten of the most important groups.

The fact that David's throne should always be held by his descendants, *i.e.*, till the captivity, about 450 years.<sup>1</sup> This was publicly proclaimed by Solomon, and its fulfilment is

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. 7. 12-17; 1 Kings 2. 4; 9. 4, 5; 2 Chron. 6. 16.

specially remarkable when contrasted with the rival kingdom of Samaria, where the dynasty changed eight or nine times in 250 years, four of these changes being also foretold.<sup>1</sup>

The division of the kingdom into ten and two tribes, evidently made public at the time, since Jeroboam had to flee, and apparently the reason why the rebels were not attacked.<sup>2</sup>

The building, destruction, rebuilding, and final destruction of the temple; the second of these predictions being often repeated, and at times creating quite a commotion.<sup>3</sup>

The destruction of the altar at Bethel, which was set up as a rival to that at Jerusalem; publicly announced some centuries before, including the name and family of the destroyer, and yet, as far as we know, not disputed by the rival kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

The final destruction of Israel by the Assyrians.<sup>5</sup>

The temporary destruction of Judah by the Babylonians, including the captivity of the Jews, its exact duration, their most unlikely restoration, and the name of the restorer.<sup>6</sup>

The destruction of Tyre.<sup>7</sup>

The capture of Nineveh and Babylon, with characteristic details, such as the Assyrian palace being dissolved in the conflagration, and Babylon being taken when the besieged were in a state of revelry, by drawing off the water of the Euphrates.<sup>8</sup>

Several of the conquests of Alexander.<sup>9</sup>

The wars between Egypt and Syria.<sup>10</sup>

We will, as before, examine a single instance in detail, and select Isaiah's prediction of the *destruction of Jerusalem*. We have chosen this, not because of its special importance, but

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 15. 29; 16. 12; 2 Kings 10. 10, 30.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 11. 30, 40; 2 Chron. 11. 4.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Sam. 7. 13; 1 Kings 9. 7; Isa. 44. 28; Dan. 9. 26; Jer. 26. 8-16.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 13. 2; 2 Kings 23. 15, 16.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Kings 14. 15; Isa. 7. 8, 9.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Kings 20. 17; Jer. 29. 10; Isa. 44. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Isa. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Nahum 2. 6; Jer. 50. 38; 51. 30-32, 57.

<sup>9</sup> Zech. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Dan. 11.

because, when considered with the surrounding circumstances, it shows the interdependence of the *miraculous* and *non-miraculous* parts of Jewish history in a remarkable manner. And this is an important point, though it is often overlooked. For convenience, we have been treating the various miracles and prophecies as separate and isolated facts; but they do not appear as such in the Bible, but are interwoven with the ordinary history in the closest manner.<sup>1</sup>

Now it will be remembered that when Sennacherib was advancing to attack Jerusalem, Hezekiah foolishly attempted to buy him off, and gave him not only all his treasures, but even cut off the gold from the doors of the temple.<sup>2</sup> He was thus reduced to the utmost poverty. But it was all of no use. Sennacherib still advanced, and publicly, and in the most insulting manner, *defied* the God of Israel to deliver Jerusalem out of his hand (about B.C. 701). We then read how Isaiah declared that God accepted the challenge, and would defend Jerusalem and would not allow it to be destroyed.<sup>3</sup> And the inviolability of the city is emphasised to such an extent that it is scarcely conceivable that the passage could have been composed after Jerusalem had actually been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (about B.C. 588). There is, of course, no real inconsistency in God's preserving Jerusalem in the one case and not in the other. For Nebuchadnezzar is always represented as being, though unconsciously, God's servant in punishing the Jews; while Sennacherib openly defied Jehovah. Next comes the miraculous destruction of the Assyrian army; and the extreme fitness of such a miracle after Sennacherib's challenge must be obvious to every one. Moreover, such a public and notorious miracle, if untrue, could not have been invented till long afterwards; and yet, as we have just shown, the narrative cannot have been written long afterwards.

We next read of the serious illness of Hezekiah, who, on being told of his unexpected recovery, naturally asks for a *sign*. Then follows the retrogression of the shadow on the dial,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 18-20; comp. 2 Chron. 32; Isa. 36-39.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 18. 14-16.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings 19. 21-34.



probably due to an earthquake.<sup>1</sup> This public miracle seems to have attracted considerable attention, since messengers came from Babylon to inquire about it, and to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery.<sup>2</sup> And here again we may ask, how could any writer have asserted all this, even a century afterwards, if no such sign had occurred?

We are then told that Hezekiah ostentatiously showed these messengers *all his treasures*, which are emphasised as if they were very costly.<sup>3</sup> Now this looks like a contradiction, for only a short time before the king had been reduced to the utmost poverty. But it so happens that an event only mentioned by a third writer explains everything.<sup>4</sup> It is that after the destruction of the Assyrians, Hezekiah was exalted in the sight of all nations, and that they brought numerous gifts not only to him, but also to the Lord at Jerusalem, which seems to imply that they thought the event miraculous. These presents, then, together perhaps with the spoils from the Assyrian tents, where the Jews may have recovered their own treasures, will fully account for this sudden change from poverty to wealth. But it will be noticed we have had to account for it ourselves by piecing together various particulars from different writers, which were evidently not written with the intention of being thus fitted together, but which do so simply because they are all parts of one true history; so that the undesigned agreement here, as elsewhere, is a strong mark of truthfulness.

And this leads up to Isaiah's strange *prediction* that all these treasures should be carried away and Jerusalem destroyed by these very Babylonians, who were then a small and friendly power, and apparently, as we learn from their own inscriptions, seeking an alliance with Hezekiah against their great and common enemy Assyria. This prediction is introduced in the most natural way possible as a rebuke to the king for his ostentatious display. And it seems almost incre-

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. ix.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. 32. 31. The date of this embassy is, however, doubtful, some placing it before Sennacherib's invasion.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings 20. 13; Isa. 39. 2.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Chron. 32. 23.

dible to consider it a later insertion, more especially as there could have been no object in inventing such an imaginary prediction centuries afterwards. And yet it seems equally incredible that the event could have been humanly foreseen. For Babylon was then a small nation, shortly to be absorbed into Assyria, and only when it reasserted its independence a century later did it become powerful enough to have caused any fear to the Jews. This example will be sufficient to show how closely the miraculous and non-miraculous parts of Jewish history are connected together, and how difficult it is to regard them all as fictitious.

It will not be necessary to discuss the other predictions at length, since that they do one and all describe the events in question is generally admitted. Indeed, in some cases, owing to the mention of names and details, it cannot possibly be denied. And therefore, of course, those who disbelieve in prediction have no alternative but to assert that they were all written *after* the event.

At this lapse of time it is difficult to prove or disprove such a statement. But it must be remembered that to assert that any apparent predictions were written after the event is not merely to destroy their superhuman character, and bring them down to the level of ordinary writings, but far below it. For ordinary writings do not contain wilful misstatements, and yet every pretended prediction written after the event cannot possibly be regarded in any other light. The choice then lies between *real predictions* and *wilful forgeries*. There is no other alternative. And bearing this in mind, we must ask, is it likely that men of such high moral character as the Hebrew prophets should have been guilty of such gross imposture? Is it likely that, if guilty of it, they should have been able to palm it off successfully on the whole Jewish nation? And is it likely that they should have had any sufficient motive to induce them to make the attempt?

Moreover, many of these predictions are stated to have been made *in public*, and to have been notorious and well known long before their fulfilment. And it is hard to see how this could have been asserted unless it was the case,

or how it could have been the case unless they were super-human.

It should also be noticed that in the Old Testament itself the occurrence of some definite and specified event is given as the *test* of a prophet, and the later prophets are continually appealing to this very test. Thus Isaiah challenges the false prophets to foretell future events, repeatedly asserts that this was a mark of a true prophet, and even represents God as calling the people His witnesses to the fact that He did foretell them future events.<sup>1</sup> Now, it seems inconceivable that men could thus court defeat by themselves proposing a test which would have shown that they were nothing more than impostors; and yet this would have been the case if all their so-called predictions had been uttered after the events.

Lastly, it is important to notice what we may call the *moral* aspect of these predictions. Their object was not to satisfy mere curiosity as to the future; they had a very different purpose. The prophet and the teacher were then combined, and the predictions were, as a rule, only a means of enforcing moral truths, especially God's overruling providence in the affairs of men. Thus the prophets did not merely foretell a future event, but proclaimed a Divine purpose in which that event was included; such, for instance, as God's determination to punish the Jews for their repeated disobedience, which, as a matter of fact, involved their dispersion. Indeed, in almost every case the *reason* why the event was to come was foretold as plainly as the event itself. And thus regarded, prophecy formed a part of revelation as well as a proof of it; and it became in the truest sense the interpreter of history, showing the Jews what were the objects God had in view in the various events which befell them.

And it has this moral use, as we may call it, still. For though it is a truth of Natural Theology that God governs the world, and carries out His purposes in the history of men just as much as in the course of nature, yet it is a truth likely to be forgotten. And the history of the Jews enforces

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 18. 22; Isa. 41. 22; 44. 8; 48. 3-5.

it on us in an instructive manner. We here see what we may call a small *sample* of the world's history, annotated by God Himself, with His object in bringing about every important event announced beforehand; this prior announcement being, of course, necessary to show that they were really God's purposes, and not the subsequent guesses of men.

And with regard to the accompanying *moral teaching* of the prophets, it must be admitted that both this and the natural theology on which it so largely rested are alike excellent. And their own conduct, as far as we can judge, seems to have been conformable to it. They were men of lofty character, resolute will, and with almost a passion for righteousness, so that they would be suitable, if any men were, to receive revelations from God. And many of them not only preached but suffered for what they preached, and even from their own nation. Nor is this to be wondered at when we remember the boldness with which they condemned the wickedness of all alike, whether kings, priests, or people. But what is to be wondered at is, that these very people should have preserved all these writings, so much to their own discredit. If the accompanying predictions were really uttered and really fulfilled, this can be accounted for. But it cannot be accounted for if these denunciations of themselves were enforced by nothing better than sham predictions uttered after the event.

(c.) *Conclusion.*—In concluding this chapter, we must notice the *cumulative nature* of the evidence. The instances we have enumerated of miraculous signs are but samples, a few out of many which might be given. This is very important, and its bearing on our present argument is naturally twofold.

In the first place, it does not at all increase, and in some respects rather decreases, the difficulty of believing them to be genuine. Thirty miracles or prophecies, provided they occur on suitable occasions, are scarcely more difficult to believe than three. And the number recorded in the Old Testament shows that, instead of being mere isolated marvels, they form a complete series. Their object was the gradual instruction of the Jews, and through them of the rest of the world, in the great truths of Natural Theology, such as the existence

of One Supreme God, who was shown to be *All-Powerful* by the miracles, *All-Wise* by the prophecies, and *All-Good* by His rewarding and punishing men and nations alike for their deeds. And it may be added that many who now believe natural theology alone, and reject all revelation, would probably never have believed even this but for the Bible. Of course, there may have been other objects as well, but with these we are not at present concerned. And assuming a miraculous revelation to be made at all, it seems, as said before, less difficult to believe that it should be made by this method of gradual development than by any other.

On the other hand, the number and variety of these alleged signs increase the difficulty of any *other* explanation to an enormous extent. Thirty miracles or prophecies are far more difficult to *disbelieve* than three. A successful fraud might take place once, but not often. An imitation miracle might be practised once, but not often. Spurious prophecies might be mistaken for genuine once, but not often. And yet, if none of these signs are true, such frauds and such deceptions must have been practised, and practised successfully, over and over again. In short, the Old Testament must be a collection of the most dishonest books ever published, for it is full of miracles and prophecies from beginning to end; and it is hard to exaggerate the immense *moral* difficulty of accepting such a view. Many of the Jewish prophets, as before said, inculcate the highest moral virtues; and the Jewish religion, especially in its later days, is admittedly of high moral character. It seems, then, to be almost incredible that its sacred writings should be merely a collection of spurious predictions uttered after the event and false miracles which never occurred. We therefore decide in this chapter that it seems probable that the history of the Jewish religion *was attested by miraculous signs.*

## CHAPTER XIII

### THAT THE ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION WAS DIVINELY REVEALED

(A.) MEANING OF THE SEVEN DAYS.

Apparent difficulties on both sides; but they disappear if the word *Day* is understood as a *Representative Term*, showing the insignificance of the time of creation in regard to God: some additional reasons for this view.

(B.) GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CREATION.

- (a.) Its pure Monotheism; admittedly true.
- (b.) Its gradual development; admittedly true.
- (c.) The method of creation; each stage being due partly to a creative impulse from God, and partly to natural forces; probably true.
- (d.) The pauses during and after creation; probably true.

(C.) DETAILED ORDER OF CREATION.

- (1.) Origin of the universe.
- (2.) Earliest state of the earth.
- (3.) Creation of Light, on first day.
- (4.) The Firmament, on second day.
- (5.) The Dry Land, } on third day.
- (6.) Vegetation, }
- (7.) Sun and Moon, on fourth day.
- (8.) Fishes and Birds, on fifth day.
- (9.) Land Animals, } on sixth day.
- (10.) Man, }

(D.) CONCLUSION.

The points of agreement with science are both many and striking: conclusion.

WE have now to examine an argument on behalf of the Jewish religion, not perhaps so strong as the preceding ones, but still deserving of attention, because it is of a different kind from all the others. It is, that the Jewish account of the

creation of the world in Genesis 1. 1-2. 3, no matter when or by whom it was written, bears internal marks of having been *divinely revealed*, since it contains a substantially correct account of events which could not have been otherwise known. This latter point is generally admitted, since there could have been no traditional knowledge of what occurred before the creation of man, and the ancients knew next to nothing of geology.

What then we have to examine is, whether this narrative is nearer the truth, as we now know it from geology and other sciences, than the unaided guesswork of a man ignorant of these sciences might be expected to be. Fortunately, in the ancient narratives of India, Persia, and elsewhere, we have abundant evidence as to how far from the truth such guesswork is likely to be. It is scarcely too much to say that they are one and all entirely false, except where they agree with Genesis. And if we admit revelation at all, there is nothing improbable in some account of the creation of the world having been revealed very early in man's history, and being accurately preserved by the Jews, while only distorted versions of it occur among other nations.

#### (A.) THE MEANING OF THE SEVEN DAYS.

And first we must consider somewhat carefully the meaning of the days of creation. Now, if the word *day* is used of a period of time, in Scripture as elsewhere, it has but two meanings—a period of twenty-four or of twelve hours. It is indeed often used in a vague indefinite sense as the *day of judgment* or the *day of the Lord*. But here there is no idea of duration; the word is used in the sense of epoch, and we might just as well say the *hour* of judgment or the *time* of the Lord. It is also used in certain prophecies as the symbol of a longer period;<sup>1</sup> but in no case does the word *day* itself denote a long period of time, or have any other than its ordinary meaning.

And yet, on the other hand, literal days would have been impossible before the creation of the sun on the fourth day, and the writer must obviously have known this. Indeed,

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Ezek. 4. 5, 6.

he implies it himself, since he expressly assigns the division of time into days and years to the sun; so that from the narrative itself ordinary solar days are out of the question.

How then are we to reconcile all this? The only satisfactory solution is that the word *day* must be understood as a *Representative Term*, relating to God, and not to man. And if so, God's *days* must be interpreted in the same manner as we should interpret God's *eye* or God's *hand*; and this removes all difficulties. By a representative term is meant a term which is not, strictly speaking, true, but which represents the truth to man in such a way that he can approximately understand it. For example, the phrase that God gained the victory *by His own right hand* clearly means that He gained it not with the assistance of others, nor with the help of weapons, but simply by His own unaided inherent strength. It was such a victory as might *in a man* be described as gained by his own right hand. God's acts are thus represented under the figure of those acts of men which most nearly correspond to them in character. And on the same principle we interpret the passage, *The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers*, and hundreds of others which occur all through the Bible. It will be noticed that we are not assigning any new meaning to the actual words themselves, such as hands, eyes, and ears; but we say that all such terms, when applied to God, are merely representative descriptions drawn from human analogies, which cannot be pressed literally.

If, then, the word *day* is applied to God, we should expect it also to be a representative term. And in the present case, that the earlier days, at any rate, refer to God seems obvious, since man was not then in existence, and ordinary solar days had not commenced. Moreover, representative terms abound in the remainder of the narrative. From God's word of command calling forth light at the beginning to His rest at the end, every one must admit that the expressions used are not, strictly speaking, true, but merely represent the truth about God in a way which man can understand.

We have hence no more right to suppose the six days to be



literal days than to suppose that God literally spoke or literally rested. What we are to suppose is that God created all things in such periods of time as might to *man* be most fitly represented by six days. Vast as the universe was, and various as were its inhabitants, man was to regard it as being to God no longer or more arduous a task than a week's work to himself. This, then, is the teaching of the narrative in regard to the time of creation. There is no positive information as to whether in itself it was long or short, but only a vivid picture of its insignificance in relation to God; to Him each stage was a mere day.

Further, if need be to support this view, we may notice four points. The first is, that it is the only one which gives the days any *theological* meaning whatever. If they mean definite periods of time of whatever length, they have at most only a scientific interest. But if they represent, however inadequately, the insignificance of the universe in regard to its Creator, they have a theological meaning. They tend to elevate man's idea of God's greatness. And therefore this view is the more probable, since the manifest aim of the whole narrative is theological and not scientific. It never explains natural phenomena as such, but merely their relation to God. It is He who creates, who commands, who names, who approves, and who blesses; and therefore we should expect such an important feature as the seven days to have some reference to God also.

Secondly, there does not seem any reason why, if literal days were meant, a total of *seven* should have been selected, rather than eight or any larger number. For if the Creator only rested twenty-four hours, what did He do afterwards? And if He continued to rest, would it not have been just as true to have selected a total of twelve days, and say that God worked for the first six and rested the second six? On the other hand, if the days represent indefinite periods of time, the choice of seven is easily explained, since we are still in the seventh day or period, to which, be it remembered, no evening is assigned.

Thirdly, this representative view of the seven days seems

to have been the one adopted by the *Israelites* themselves, for they were quite familiar with the principle that human measures of time when applied to God were not to be taken literally. Thus we are told that a thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday; and elsewhere we read, "Hast thou eyes of flesh, or seest thou as man seeth? Are thy days as the days of man, or thy years as man's days?"<sup>1</sup> Here days and years are applied to God in precisely the same manner as eyes and seeing, which every one admits are representative terms only. Moreover, the writer or compiler of this very part of Genesis seems to have thus understood the days, since, after describing the creation in six days, he refers to it all as having taken place in one day.<sup>2</sup> There is, of course, no contradiction here if, and only if, the word denotes an indefinite period.

But it may be said, does not the Fourth Commandment, *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth*, imply that the *Israelites* did understand the days as literal? Certainly not. The view here advocated only completes the parallelism between the days of creation and the days of man's labour. For days are not the only things paralleled, but also *work* and *rest*. Now, none will deny that God's work differs not only in magnitude but in kind from man's work, and His rest from man's rest. Why then should the *days* of His work be the same as the days of man's work? If they are not, and are merely representative terms like work and rest, the parallel is perfect.

Lastly, the *Indian* account of the creation, which is the only other that has any mention of days, supports this view; for we are told that each of Brahma's days was not twenty-four hours, but 12,000,000 years!<sup>3</sup> Such was the meaning they assigned to a human measure of time when applied to God. These, then, are additional reasons, though they are really unnecessary, for thinking that the days of Genesis are only *representative terms*, and indicate indefinite periods of time.

We have gone thus fully into the question of the *days*

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 90. 4; Job 10. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 2. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Warington's "Week of Creation," p. 81.

because of the alleged contradiction between Genesis and geology. Such a contradiction is plainly impossible; their teaching is so essentially distinct in character that they cannot even come in contact. Whatever science may discover is of necessity limited to time as related to man, as measured by human standards; and of this Genesis tells us nothing. What it does tell us is the time of creation in its relation to God; and of this science can never tell us anything. Indeed, as Warington says, there is only one way in which the discoveries of science can affect this subject. By the help of science we may obtain a truer conception of the real dimensions and marvellous constitution of the universe, a truer idea of the enormous lapse of ages during which it was being elaborated to its present perfection; thus obtaining also a truer idea of the eternal greatness of *Him* to whom the whole of this vast work seemed but as one week's labour.

(B.) THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CREATION.

We pass on now to some general principles which are stated or implied in the narrative, and which are of great importance.

(a.) *Its pure Monotheism.*

And first as to its pure Monotheism. This alone renders it almost, if not quite, unique among similar narratives. According to the writer, the whole universe, including sun, moon, and stars, was all due to one *First Cause*. That this is strictly correct we have already shown in the earlier chapters of this essay; and it may seem obvious enough now, but was it equally so when the narrative was written? Certainly not. For other ancient accounts were saturated either with *Pantheism*, *i.e.*, confusing God with the universe, or else *Dualism*, *i.e.*, assuming two eternal principles of good and evil, or else *Polytheism*, *i.e.*, making the universe the joint product of several gods. The Jewish writer, on the other hand, has kept clear of all these theories; and he is admittedly right and all the others wrong.

(b.) *Its gradual development.*

Next, it must be noticed that, according to Genesis, the creation of the world was on the system of gradual develop-

ment. God did not create a perfect universe all at once, but slowly built it up step by step. At first the earth was waste and void, and only after it had passed through several stages did it become fully ordered and peopled. Moreover, at every step God surveyed the work and pronounced it good. He seems to have discerned a beauty and fitness intrinsic to each stage. And thus, while He found supreme satisfaction only at the close, when He could say of the whole finished work that it was *very good*, yet there was a lower satisfaction, calling forth a lower approval, simply *good*, at each step.

Now what has science to say to this? It can only re-echo its truth from beginning to end. What is the whole of geology but an overwhelming testimony to the fact that the furnishing and peopling of the earth has been a gradual process, not accomplished all at once, but slowly step by step? It shows that the earth existed for ages before the appearance of man; and also that those ages were of such magnitude and importance that we cannot regard them as mere preparations for his coming, but as having a beauty and excellence strictly their own. Thus, according to science, though man is the highest and latest member of creation, there were many earlier stages which well deserved the epithet *good*.

But we may ask, how did the writer of Genesis know all this? Even if we assume that the idea of gradual development was not an unlikely one for him to think of, why should he have said that light was good without eyes to see it, or that sea and land were good with none to inhabit them? Why, in short, should he have thought not only that there were numerous stages in creation, but that each was good in itself, as well as being a means towards the next?

(c.) *The method of creation.*

Now, how was this gradual development effected? The narrative implies that each successive stage was due to two causes—a creative impulse from God, and the already existing forces of nature. As to the first, every creative act is accomplished by a *word of command* from God. This does not, of course, mean that certain words were audibly uttered, but that the kind of power God exerted could be least inadequately

represented by the human word of command. It was not a physical material power, such as man would have had to employ, but rather a mental one, the Almighty not labouring to perform His work, but accomplishing it all by a mere *word*.

On the other hand, it is plain that every act of creation was in a certain sense a *fashioning* act. The materials for the later stages existed in the results of the earlier, and the forces already at work had their part in bringing about the ends desired. This is clearly set forth in the creation of life. At each stage there is, of course, a special command implying a new impulse from God, but it is addressed to the already existing land or waters, ordering them to bring forth. This *bring forth*, moreover, is in ver. 11 (R.V.) *put forth*, *i.e.*, the *Hiphil* or causative voice of the Hebrew verb, showing that the land had an active and not merely a passive share in the production of plants. It may also be added that the closing statement of Gen. 2. 3, *God created and made*, is translated by many critics, *God created by making*; which would imply that His method all along was a fashioning or evolving process rather than a series of fresh creations. According to Genesis, then, each successive stage in the gradual development of the world was due partly to a creative impulse from God, and partly to the already existing forces of nature.

Now what has science to say to this? It can say nothing directly, for causation is, strictly speaking, beyond the scope of science, which deals only with antecedents and consequents, but indirectly it confirms it. For, on the one hand, it shows that natural forces have been at work all along; and yet, on the other, it is unable to account for the *first* appearance of the various members of creation, such as plants, animals, and men. It is not, of course, disputed that these various stages were, or may have been, evolved from the previous ones, *e.g.*, the vital from the non-vital, which Genesis itself implies in the words *and the earth brought forth grass*. What is disputed is, that this evolution took place merely under the influence of natural development, and without the further influence of a new creative impulse. And considering that all attempts to effect a similar transition *now* have failed

hopelessly, it is not unreasonable to suppose that there was some other and special cause at work then. Nor is it easy to see on *prima facie* grounds how some of the changes could have been otherwise effected. For instance, when the first *free agent*, whether animal or man, appeared on this planet, a force totally different from all previous ones was introduced; and no natural process of whatever kind can bridge over the gulf which separates natural forces from free forces, since the latter are in their essence supernatural.

Anyhow, it must be admitted that Divine impulses would adequately account for these various steps in creation, and that science cannot account for them in any other way; while if such impulses occurred at all, the positions assigned to them in Genesis are plainly the most suitable. Or, to put the same conclusion in other words, science knows nothing as to what really brought about the different stages in creation, and therefore agrees, as far as it can agree, with Genesis, which expressly assigns them to a Cause of which science could not possibly know anything. Thus they both recognise in creation the working of natural causes, and both require an originating First Cause as well.

(d.) *The pauses during and after creation.*

It must next be noticed that, according to Genesis, the work of creation was not carried on continuously, nor was it carried on for ever; there were pauses, and there was a final rest. We might have expected that after the first step in creation God would at once have proceeded to the next. But He paused; *evening* came, and the work was suspended; and not until *morning* also came, thus completing the first day, was it resumed. This is the obvious meaning of the phrase, "And there was evening and there was morning, one day."<sup>1</sup> These expressions are precisely parallel to *and there was light* in ver. 3; and just as the light succeeded the previous command, so the evening succeeded the light, and the morning succeeded the evening. There was thus a nightly pause after each day's work till the seventh day, when there was a final rest.

<sup>1</sup> R.V.; the A.V. is admittedly wrong here.

No close is mentioned of this day, so the Creator is still resting.

And here also science seems in agreement. Geology shows beyond doubt that long *pauses* occurred in the history of the earth, when there was apparently but little progress. It is not meant that no evolution at all took place during these periods, but none involving any transition into another stage. For instance, when fishes and birds appeared, they were not immediately followed by land animals, but a long pause occurred, during which time they went on developing, but only *after their kind*. This is what is meant by science agreeing in principle with the pauses of Genesis. So also the fact that the Creator is now *resting* is strongly supported by science. Nowhere in nature, either animate or inanimate, is there any trace of creation as a process now going on. Of course, there are changes and developments in abundance, and also the continual maintenance of all existing forces; but *as the Creator*, God is resting. So here, as in other cases, the general principles of the narrative are either certainly or probably correct.

(C.) THE DETAILED ORDER OF CREATION.

We pass on now to the detailed order of creation. It will be remembered that in Genesis, after describing the origin of the universe and the earliest state of the earth, eight acts of creation are enumerated, two of which occurred on the third and two on the sixth day. We have thus altogether ten subjects to examine.

(1.) *The origin of the universe.*—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." It is, I believe, admitted on all sides that the Hebrew word for *created* does not necessarily mean created out of nothing. The most probable derivation is from a root meaning to cut, or to fashion by cutting, the materials so cut or fashioned being already in existence. It may hence be used in the sense of the modern scientific word to *evolve*. And that this is its meaning here is probable from the same word being used later on for the creation of sea-monsters, which, however, we are told were produced, not from nothing, but from the previous waters.

Moreover, it is doubtful in any case whether the writer could have meant a creation out of nothing in the strict sense, for probably the Jews had no idea of a scientific vacuum. A creation from previous gaseous matter would quite satisfy the language, so that the eternal existence of matter, as it is called, is left an open question by Genesis. And the term heaven and earth, it may be mentioned, is the common Hebrew one for the universe, and therefore little stress can be laid on *heaven* coming before earth. But it may possibly imply a priority in time of creation, since throughout the rest of the narrative successive rather than simultaneous creations are described. And if so, it is almost certainly correct, for many suns and stars came into existence before our earth. Omitting, however, this doubtful point, it is clear from Genesis that the universe had an origin, and this origin was due to God; and, as we have already shown, science forces us to precisely the same conclusion.

(2.) *The earliest state of the earth.*—According to Genesis, taking the words in their obvious and natural sense, the earth was at first *waste and void* and in *darkness*, and apparently surrounded by *the waters*. And if, adopting the usual nebular hypothesis, we refer this to the first period after it became a separate planet, the statements seem quite correct. For we know from geology that the earth was then waste and void as far as any form of life was concerned, while it was probably surrounded by a dense mass of watery vapours sufficient to produce darkness.

(3.) *Light.*—The first step in the development of the earth was the introduction of light. This word probably means such light as we meet with in nature, which always includes heat, and is hence equivalent to what we now call radiant force. And turning to science, it is clear that, being given the raw materials of a planet, the introduction of radiant force must be the first step in developing and arranging them. For on it depends all changes in temperature, the formation of winds, clouds, rain, and ocean currents. Moreover, it supplies the physical power needed for the life of plants and animals; so that *light* must have been the first step in creation.



Of course, the *source* of light at this early period was diffused through an immense space, being, in fact, the remainder of the nebula from which our planet was thrown off. But still, as it was all on one side of the revolving earth, there would be the alternations of day and night, which are alluded to in the narrative. It may also be noticed that Genesis seems to associate light with *motion*. ("The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light.") And this is the more significant in view of the modern discovery that light is due to the undulations of æther, and is, in fact, only a form of motion.

(4.) *The firmament*.—The next step was the separation of the waters above (the clouds) from the waters below (the seas), and the interposition of a firmament or expanse (see margin), *i.e.*, the *atmosphere*. The idea that the writer thought this expanse meant a solid plane or shell holding up the waters above is quite unnecessary, and indeed untenable. The upper waters, above the "heaven," plainly mean the sources from which the rain comes.<sup>1</sup> And these sources are seen by common observation to be clouds, and no writer could have thought that a solid firmament intervened between the clouds and the earth; more especially as we read later on that birds are to fly in this firmament. Now the formation of the atmosphere was doubtless due to the cooling of the earth, when some of the surrounding gases became mechanically united to form air. And the order in which it is placed after light and before plants and animals is obviously correct.

(5.) *The dry land*.—We now come to an important point, the first appearance of dry land. According to Genesis, there was not always dry land on the earth; the whole of it was originally covered by the waters. And turning to science, it seems probable that this was actually the case. The earth was originally surrounded by watery vapours, which gradually condensed and formed a kind of universal ocean. And then, when irregularities were caused in the surface, either by volcanic action or else by its contracting and crumpling up,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 8. 2.

the water would collect into the hollows, forming seas, and dry land would appear elsewhere. But how was it possible for the writer of Genesis to know all this? There is nothing in the present aspect of nature to suggest that there was once a time when there was no dry land; and if it was a guess on his part, it was, to say the least, a very remarkable one.

(6.) *Vegetation.*—We now come to the first introduction of life, and we must examine it carefully. Vegetation then depends for its continuance upon four things: *soil*, which furnishes plants with a basis for growth and with part of their food; *air*, whence the principal part of their food is derived; *water*, which keeps the soil and air in a suitable condition; and *light*, including heat, which supplies the plants with the necessary physical force. These, it will be observed, are precisely the four conditions which the narrative represents as existing when God said, *Let the earth put forth grass*. Accordingly, when this Divine impulse was given, and vital force was added, the land at once brought forth grass. The position then at which life is introduced in the narrative is perfectly correct.

With regard to the subdivisions of vegetable life, the narrative speaks of only three—grass, herbs, and fruit-trees—and it seems to imply that these appeared simultaneously. But considering the general structure of the narrative, which, as before said, is that of a sequence of events, the other view, that they appeared successively, is at least tenable. This would mean that vegetable life, now first introduced on this planet, gave rise to a long line of descendants, the three most important groups being specially mentioned. And the order in which these come agrees well with geology. We have first *grass*, which apparently means here *seedless* vegetation, since seed is specially mentioned in regard to the other two, but omitted here. This, then, would correspond to what we now call cryptogams, such as seaweeds, mosses, and ferns, which are propagated by spores, and not by seeds, and these undoubtedly came first. *Herbs* are mentioned next, probably cereals and vegetables; and lastly, *fruit-trees*, which did not occur till comparatively late in geological time.

However, little stress can be laid on this, as the meaning of

the Hebrew words is rather uncertain; some writers maintaining that *grass* is a comprehensive term including both the others, and meaning vegetation. What is certain is, that according to Genesis the whole of vegetation was due to only one creative impulse, as there was only one Divine command. So that terrestrial flora, however various at present, was all due to the capacity once given to the earth to *put forth grass*. And with this science entirely agrees, for between the lowest and highest forms of vegetable life there is no break of sufficient magnitude to render any fresh impulse necessary, or even probable.

Before passing on, an apparent difficulty may be noticed, which is, ~~that the series of plants and trees was not, as a matter of fact, complete before the following periods of creation.~~ Some new species, for instance, were evolved long after the commencement of fishes and birds, and similarly some fishes and birds after the commencement of animals. But the difficulty is entirely due to the fact that the various classes *overlap* to some extent. And the order given in Genesis is far nearer the truth than any other order would be. Had the writer, for example, placed them fishes, birds, plants, animals, or animals, fishes, birds, plants, he would have been hopelessly wrong. As it is, he is as near the truth as he can be, provided classes which really overlap have to be arranged in a consecutive narrative.

(7.) *The sun and moon.*—The fourth day's work consisted in the formation of the sun and moon. The stars are also mentioned, but it is not said that they were actually made on this day, and they are not alluded to in the opening command. Now, the alleged creation of the sun *after* that of light is undoubtedly the most striking point in the whole narrative, and was long thought to be a difficulty. The usual explanation was that the sun's creation was described long before, under the term *heaven*, and that on the fourth day it first became visible to this planet, owing to the removal of previous clouds. These clouds would of course allow the sun's light to pass on the first day, though the sun itself might not be seen till much later; in the same way that we cannot now see the sun

on a cloudy day, though we see its light. And in support of this it was urged that the word *made* ("God made two great lights") means *appointed* rather than created, and is often so translated.<sup>1</sup>

But this seems rather a forced explanation, and is happily no longer necessary. For science has now proved to almost a certainty that the statement of Genesis is strictly correct. However strange it may seem at first sight, light did undoubtedly exist long before the sun. In other words, the gaseous matter forming the original nebula of our solar system was luminous long before it contracted and consolidated into a body with a definite outline which could be called a sun. And as a small satellite like the earth would cool and consolidate much quicker than the central mass, vegetation might take place here before the gaseous nebula had become a sun. Thus the formation of the sun after light is certainly correct, and after the atmosphere, dry land, and vegetation, probably correct.

It has also been noticed that Genesis says that the sun and moon were ordained for *seasons*, thus implying that there were no seasons before. And this, though a remarkable statement, seems also correct. For according to Lyell, the flora of the Carboniferous period points to a climate that was moist, equable in temperature, and with neither frost nor intense heat.<sup>2</sup> And if there was thus neither summer heat nor winter cold, there could have been no seasons in the ordinary sense of the term; and this is confirmed by the fact that the earliest trees have no annular rings, which result from the change of seasons. Little stress, however, can be laid on this, as the meaning of Genesis and the teaching of science are both somewhat uncertain.

Three objections have now to be considered. The first is, that the *moon* would probably consolidate before the earth, being smaller, and not after it, like the sun. But in popular language they might naturally be classed together. Indeed, when considered as lights, as they are in the narrative, it is

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, 1 Sam. 12. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Lyell's "Elements of Geology," 6th edit., 1865, p. 501.

quite correct to do so, since moonlight is only reflected sunlight. This is of course obvious to every one now, but was it equally so when the narrative was written?

The second objection is, that the sun and moon are said to have been set in the *firmament* or expanse, which is not strictly correct if this means the atmosphere. But they certainly appear to be so, and the writer could scarcely have meant it literally; for any one can see that the clouds (*i.e.*, the waters above the firmament) are not, as a matter of fact, on the other side of the sun and moon, but frequently come in front of them. It may also be added that the English word *heaven* has a similar vagueness, for we speak of the clouds of heaven and the stars of heaven.

The third and most important objection is, that this part of the narrative is thoroughly *geocentric*. The earth is the centre of everything, and even the sun, or at all events its light, is represented as existing solely for the sake of lighting the earth. Now no doubt the narrative takes for granted that the earth is the most important member of the solar system; but no objection can be taken to this, provided none of the statements are false. The narrative was intended for all mankind, and not for the learned few, and was therefore written in such a way that all mankind could understand what was meant, which they could not have done had the opposite theory been assumed. And we still do much the same when we speak of the sun's rising and setting. Moreover, as far as man himself is concerned—and the narrative was written for him alone—the earth undoubtedly is the most important member. And then as to the *object* of sunlight, science of course knows nothing as to what was the real object the Creator had in view when He designed this or anything else; but we do know that sunlight is of use to the inhabitants of this planet, and we do not know that it serves any other useful purpose whatever.

These, however, are but minor matters; the important point, as before said, is that the writer of Genesis places the creation of the sun *after* that of light. This must have appeared when it was written, and for thousands of years afterwards, an

obvious absurdity, since every one could see that the sun was the source of light. We now know that it is quite correct. But is it likely that the writer of Genesis had any human means of knowing this; or is it likely that, without such means, he should have made such a lucky guess, which, though seemingly absurd at the time, has turned out thousands of years afterwards to be correct? It seems hard to exaggerate the great improbability of either of these alternatives; and yet there is no other, unless we admit that the knowledge was divinely revealed.

(8.) *Fishes and birds.*—We next come to the introduction of fishes and birds. It is not clear whether the narrative means that they appeared simultaneously or successively, though here, as in other cases, the latter is the more probable. And it is needless to point out that science entirely agrees both in thus placing fishes before birds and also in placing both of these after plants. Indeed, this latter point must be obvious to every naturalist, since the food of all animals is derived, either directly or indirectly, from the vegetable world. And Genesis is equally correct in emphasising the great *abundance* of marine life at this period, though, as far as we know, had the same been said of fowl it would not have been correct; and also in specially alluding to the great *sea-monsters* (wrongly translated *whales* in A.V., but not in R.V.), since these huge saurians were a most striking feature of the time.

It should also be noticed that the narrative associates fishes and birds together, and separates them from mammals; and this, though by no means obvious, is also correct. For fishes and birds are both oviparous, producing their young in eggs; their method of locomotion, either by wings in the air or fins in the water, is extremely similar; and their blood is practically the same, though this latter point was only discovered in modern times. Mammals, it may be mentioned, are quite different in each of these important respects. But again we must ask, what was there to suggest to the writer of Genesis that birds more resemble fishes, which live in the water, than animals, which, like themselves, are air-breathers and live on the land?

But we now come to what is perhaps the most important argument against the accuracy of the narrative. It refers to *invertebrate* animals, which include an immense variety of creatures, ranging from sponges and corals up to insects and shell-fish; and where do these come in the narrative? Some would place them among the *moving creatures* brought forth by the waters; and certainly some shell-fish might be appropriately included there. Others would place them among the *creeping things* brought forth on the land; and certainly land-snails and insects could with equal fitness be included there. But in either case the order given in Genesis would be quite wrong, for invertebrate animals of some kind accompanied plants all along, and even as a class did not succeed them. The earliest invertebrate no doubt succeeded the earliest plant, but long before plants attained their full development numerous invertebrate animals appeared.

But the difficulty is by no means insuperable, for neither of the above classes need include invertebrates. The former may refer to fishes alone, and the latter to snakes, though perhaps it really means small creeping mammals, since the other animals associated with them are undoubtedly mammals. Why then may not invertebrate animals be omitted from the narrative altogether? It never claims to describe everything that was created; and its extreme brevity, combined with the relative insignificance of these creatures, might well account for their being left out. And if so, the difficulty vanishes.

(9.) *Land animals*.—We next come to land animals or mammalia, which apparently were produced from the earth, and not from previous fishes and birds. Science can give no corroboration here, though it shows that the order in which land animals are placed, after fishes and birds and before man, is quite correct. With regard to the subdivision of these animals, only three classes are mentioned: *cattle* (domestic animals), *creeping things* (meaning doubtful), and *beasts of the earth* (wild animals). And as they come in a different order in verses 24 and 25, perhaps due to some error in copying, it would be unsafe to found on them any argument either way.

A slight difficulty has now to be noticed. It is that, judging

by geology alone, a few mammals appeared nearly as early as birds, and perhaps even preceded them; though this latter point is doubtful, since traces of birds are said to appear in the Lower Trias, and mammals not till the Upper Trias. One explanation that has been given is that the *fowl* of Genesis included flying reptiles, which undoubtedly preceded all mammals. But this seems rather unnatural, and it is certainly better to take *fowl* as meaning birds in its popular sense. But why may not *cattle* and *beasts of the earth* be treated in the same way? All ordinary animals, both domestic and wild, did succeed birds; the only ones which are even alleged to have preceded them are a few marsupials. Moreover, it is only fair to remember that the geological record is very imperfect. Much remains to be discovered, or this early group of mammals will be an anomaly hard to account for on any theory.

We have discussed this and other alleged difficulties at length, and, as we have seen, none of them are very formidable. But in dwelling on details like these, there is a danger of forgetting the main features, which are, after all, the important point. They are briefly these. In Genesis there are three periods of life, each with a leading feature: that of the third day being vegetation; that of the fifth day fishes and birds, special mention being made of great sea-monsters; and that of the sixth day land animals, and at its close man. Now, turning to science we find that geologists have grouped the sedimentary rocks into three great classes. And if we exclude invertebrate animals, which are common all through, these classes have precisely the same characteristics as the three periods in Genesis. The Primary age is distinguished by its exuberant vegetation; the Secondary by its saurians, or great sea-monsters; and the Tertiary by its land animals; and at its close (now often called the Quaternary) by man. The harmony between the two is, to say the least, very remarkable.

(10.) *Man*.—Last of all we come to the creation of man. This clearly means mankind or the human species, and not a single individual, from the subsequent words, "Let them have dominion." Now this creation of man is represented as not



only separate in time and distinct in nature, but of an altogether higher order than any of the preceding ones. God did not say, *Let the earth bring forth a thinking animal*, or anything of that kind, but, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*. This Divine likeness, which is emphasised in the narrative, must of course depend not on any attribute, bodily or mental, which man shares with animals—for if so, they also would be in the image of God—but on some attribute which distinguishes man from the rest of creation. So far then from showing anthropomorphic views of God it shows a *theomorphic* view of man. And yet, strange to say, the writer who assigns to man this unique character, with dominion over the rest of nature, does not give him, as we should have expected, a day to himself in the narrative, but links him together with land animals as both appearing on the sixth day. He thus represents man as having a certain relationship with animals, though being in part supernatural.

And science agrees in all five points, both as to the relative *time* at which man appeared; his being due to a distinct *cause* or impulse; this impulse being of a *higher order* than any preceding one; man being in consequence an *image of God*, and yet closely allied to *animals* in his physical nature.

And first as to the time of man's appearance. Every one agrees that this was not till towards the close of the Tertiary or most recent group of strata; and no animal can be shown to have appeared since then. Man was thus not only a late, but the very latest member of creation, which is precisely the position assigned to him in Genesis.

Next, as to a special cause having led to his introduction, we have already considered in Chap. v. the enormous difference between animals and man. And though the first man may have been evolved from a previous ape, such a vast change, especially if it only occurred once in the world's history, seems to have required a special Divine impulse. At all events, science cannot account for it in any other way.

Moreover, this evolution involved not only a great development of existing faculties, but the introduction of an altogether new and higher faculty, *i.e.*, the known possession of a free

will, enabling man on a small scale both to design and to accomplish. This has been already shown to be the characteristic of man when compared with the rest of creation, so need not be further considered here.

Fourthly, it will be remembered that the possession of a similar freedom, also able both to design and to accomplish, was shown in Chaps. i and iii. to be the characteristic of God Himself, which distinguished His action from that of all natural forces. Scientifically, then, it is strictly true to say that man is made *in the image of God*, since the special attribute which distinguishes him from all else on this planet is precisely the attribute of God Himself. Christians of course see a far deeper meaning in the words, but with this we are not now concerned.

While, lastly, science has rendered it abundantly clear that, in spite of all this, man in his physical nature is closely allied to land animals. And therefore the division in Genesis of fishes and birds on one day, and land animals and man on another, is more correct than the more obvious division of all animals on one day and man on another.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

We have now examined in detail the account of creation given in Genesis, and have compared it as far as possible with the teaching of astronomy and geology. There is, however, one other science to be considered, which is Comparative Biology, or the theory of Evolution, as it is popularly called. We have not alluded to this before, because the arguments are not of such a kind as to appeal to the ordinary reader. Suffice it to say that it entirely corroborates the order given in Genesis, as has been admitted by its leading exponents. For instance, Romanes says, and as if the fact was undisputed, "The order in which the flora and fauna are said, by the Mosaic account, to have appeared upon the earth corresponds with that which the theory of Evolution requires and the evidence of geology proves."<sup>1</sup> We conclude, then, that the order in which the different members of creation are said to have

<sup>1</sup> *Nature*, 11th August 1881.

appeared in Genesis is in most cases certainly, and in all cases probably, correct.

Now, the importance of this can scarcely be exaggerated, for the points of agreement between Genesis and science are far too many and far too unlikely to be due to accident. They are far too many; for the chances against even eight events being put down in their correct order by guesswork is 40,319 to 1. And they are far too unlikely; for what could have induced an ignorant man to say that light came before the sun, or that the earth once existed without any dry land? And even in other matters the order is not an obvious one. For instance, land animals might have come before birds and fishes, or man might have been shown as created first, and animals subsequently for his food and amusement. Indeed, according to some critics, this is actually the case in the other account of the creation given in Gen. 2; though it is doubtful whether this is an independent account, or merely notes on the previous one, not arranged chronologically, and perhaps referring to the individual Adam rather than to the human species. Anyhow, the order is clearly given in the first account, and, as we have seen, it is almost certainly correct.

Moreover, the general *principles* of the narrative which we have already examined, especially its pure *Monotheism* and its *gradual development*, are very strongly in its favour. While, lastly, our admiration for the narrative is still further increased by its extreme conciseness and simplicity. Seldom, indeed, has such a mass of information been condensed into as few lines; and seldom has such a difficult subject been treated so accurately, and yet in such simple and popular language.

Now what conclusion can be drawn from all this? There seem to be only two alternatives to choose from: either the writer, whoever he was, knew as much, or more, of science than we do, or else the knowledge was revealed to him by God. And if we admit that a revelation is credible, the latter certainly seems the less improbable. We therefore conclude that this account of the creation appears to have been *Divinely revealed*.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THAT THEREFORE THE JEWISH RELIGION IS PROBABLY TRUE

Only two questions remain to be discussed.

(A.) THE SUBJECT OF PRAYER.

Its universality. There are, however, three objections. It is said to be (1) scientifically incredible, as inconsistent with the uniformity of nature; (2) morally wrong, as impugning the power, wisdom, and goodness of God; and (3) practically useless, as shown by statistics: but none of these can be maintained.

(B.) THE CHARACTER ASCRIBED TO GOD.

(a.) Mental difficulties, or anthropomorphism: but we must use some representative terms when speaking of the Deity, and the writers quite understood the terms to be such.

(b.) Moral difficulties; since God is represented as (1) acting unjustly; (2) ordering wicked deeds; (3) approving of wicked men; and (4) sanctioning wicked customs: but these objections are not so great as they seem.

(c.) Counter-arguments. The Jews firmly believed in Monotheism, and had the highest mental and moral conception of the Deity; so that their religion was Natural Theology, only with certain additions.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

The Jewish Religion is probably true.

WE have been considering in the previous chapters several strong arguments in favour of the Jewish religion. Before concluding we must of course notice any *adverse* arguments which we have not already dealt with. The only two of any importance refer to the subject of Prayer and the Character ascribed to God. The former is, no doubt, the more important, since the teaching is not confined to a few texts, but runs all through the Old Testament; whereas most of the diffi-

culties under the latter head depend on single passages, which might all be omitted without affecting the religion as a whole.

(A.) THE SUBJECT OF PRAYER.

Now the Jewish, in common with most other religions, asserts the value of prayer, not only for obtaining what are called spiritual blessings, but also as a means of influencing natural events. And yet prayer with such an object is said by many to be scientifically *incredible*, morally *wrong*, and practically *useless*. So we will first glance at the universality of the custom, and then consider these objections in turn.

Now, prayer of some kind is, and always has been, the universal rule in almost every religion. It is practically coextensive with the human race. 'No one can point to its inventor, no one can point to a time when men did not pray.' Missionaries have not to teach savages to pray, but merely to *Whom* to pray. In short, prayer in the germ seems universal, just as the moral sense of right and wrong, though of course each is capable of being trained and perfected. And its intrinsic vitality is such that it has everywhere stood its ground for thousands of years. Nor is it in any way like an animal's cry of pain when hurt, which, though universal, means nothing; for this of course resembles a man's cry of pain, and has no connection with prayer whatever. If, then, prayer is a delusion, it is a very remarkable one, especially as in ancient religions prayer was made to false gods who could not answer it; and yet, in spite of every failure, the belief in prayer has always remained. Men have always preferred to think that the failure was due to their own unworthiness, rather than disbelieve in a God who answers prayer. And this *universality* of the custom is alone a strong argument in its favour; for it seems most unlikely that God should have implanted in mankind a universal habit of asking if He never intended to answer. We pass on now to the objections.

(1.) *Scientific objection*.—In the first place, it is said that answers to prayer are scientifically or mentally *incredible*, since they would involve God's continually interfering with the course of nature. The most probable explanation is, that they are

only a particular class of *superhuman coincidences*. According to this theory, God, knowing beforehand that the prayer would be offered, arranged beforehand to answer it. Thus the prayer was not a direct cause of the event which fulfilled it, but it might still have been an indirect cause. For had the man not prayed, God, foreknowing this, might have arranged for the corresponding event not to have happened. Of course, at the time when the prayer was offered, the event might have been, and probably was, a natural consequence of other events already past, and so could not have been prevented except by some special interference on God's part. Yet, as just shown, the prayer might still have been indirectly a cause of its own fulfilment.

And the same argument applies even to the most extreme case, when the prayer is made after the event. Suppose, for instance, a man heard of the loss of a ship in which his son was travelling, and prayed for his safety. That safety, as far as the shipwreck was concerned, must have been decided before the father prayed. But yet, as everything was foreknown to God, his subsequent prayer might not have been useless; since, if God had not known that the father would have prayed, He might not have brought about the son's safety. Of course, it may be said that this is making the cause come after the effect, and is therefore absurd. No doubt it would be so if merely physical forces were involved; but when we are dealing with personal beings, able to foresee and to act accordingly, there is nothing impossible in a cause happening after what was in a certain sense its effect. For instance, my going for a holiday next week may be the cause of my working hard this week; though, strictly speaking, it is my foreknowledge of the cause, and action taken in consequence of this, that produce the effect. So in the case before us. Strictly speaking, it is God's *foreknowledge* that the prayer would be offered, and some action He took in consequence, which produced the effect; but for all practical purposes this is the same as if the prayer produced it.

From this it is plain that answers to prayer, when regarded as superhuman coincidences, do not involve any interference with the course of nature. And yet this theory does not

detract from their value and importance, any more than God's foreknowledge in other respects makes human conduct of no importance. In every case God foreknows the result, not in spite of, but because He also foreknows, the man's conduct on which it depends. It ought perhaps to be mentioned that many persons take the opposite view, and believe that prayer is a direct cause of its fulfilment, and that after and in consequence of the prayer, God takes some action, which He would not have otherwise taken, to bring about the desired result. But this view, though not perhaps incredible, is certainly very improbable, for it makes every answer to prayer a kind of miracle, and it seems contrary to the general purposes of God to interfere with nature where the results could have been equally well obtained by original adjustment. And therefore, as we have said, it seems more likely that answers to prayer are only superhuman coincidences; and if so, all scientific difficulties are at an end.

(2.) *Moral objection.*—Next as to the moral difficulties. Prayer, it is said, is morally *wrong*, since it impugns each of the three great attributes of the Deity. It impugns His *Power*, by implying that He is under the partial control of men; His *Wisdom*, by implying that He has to be informed of what we want; and His *Goodness*, by implying that He cannot be trusted to act for the best without our interference.

And first, as to God's *Power*. No one who prays supposes that the Deity is under the control of his prayers, but merely that He may freely choose to be influenced by them. Insignificant as man is in comparison with his Maker, we have already shown that God takes an interest in his welfare. And admitting this, all human analogy is strongly in favour of a personal being being influenced by the prayers of those for whom he cares. They cannot, it is true, make him change his will, but they may induce him to do so. Moreover, if there is a difficulty here, it equally applies in other cases. For instance, God as the Author of Nature seems to will that a piece of land should produce thorns. Is it trying to change His Will to cultivate it so that it may produce wheat? In short, every effort man makes may in a certain sense be said

to be in opposition to God's Will ; the answer being, of course, that God has Himself given man the capacity for doing what he does. And prayer, which is merely asking God to do something, seems of the two to be less opposing His Will than trying to do it ourselves. And if we ask for anything which is really contrary to His Will, no one believes that He would grant it.

Secondly, as to God's *Wisdom*. No one believes that prayer is for the information of the Deity, or for arousing His sympathy, but merely that it is the way which He has Himself chosen for us to show our trust in Him. Nor is there anything unlikely in this. Passive adoration would, no doubt, be most suitable for an Impersonal God ; but for a Personal God possessing Free Will, an appeal to this Free Will is certainly the more fitting. It shows our belief in His Personality, and is a strong help to us in trying to realise it.

Thirdly, as to God's *Goodness*. As a matter of fact, God does not wait for us to pray to send most of His blessings. The vast majority of them come without our co-operation, but a few of them are said to be conditional on our praying. And this is quite consistent with perfect goodness. Human analogy is decisive on the point. A father may know what his child wants, may be quite willing to supply that want, and may yet choose to wait till the child asks him. And why ? Simply because supplying his wants is not the whole object the father has in view. He also wishes to train the child's character ; to teach him to rely upon and trust his father, and to develop his confidence and gratitude. And all this would be obviously unattainable if the father supplied all his wants as a machine would do ; in which case the child might perhaps forget that his father was not a machine. Now, for all we know, precisely the same may be the case with regard to prayer. God may wish not only to supply man's wants, but also to train and develop his character. Indeed, as shown in Chap. vi., the existence of evil seems to force us to this very conclusion. And if so, it is out of the question to say that His not giving in all cases a good gift till it is asked for is incompatible with His perfect goodness. It may be, and



probably is, a very sign of that goodness. For, as already said, God's goodness does not consist of simple beneficence, but also of righteousness. And, as a general rule, it certainly seems right that those who believe in God and take the trouble to ask for His blessings should be the ones to receive them.

The objection, then, that prayer is morally wrong cannot be maintained from any point of view. It does not conflict with either God's power, wisdom, or goodness; but, according to both the Jewish and Christian religions, it is the way chosen by God Himself for man to approach Him. It may, however, be noticed, in conclusion, that a certain class of prayers would be wrong. We have no right to pray for *miracles*, e.g., for water to run uphill, or for a dead man to come to life again; though we have a right to pray for any ordinary event, such as rain or recovery from sickness. The reason for this distinction is obvious. A miracle is, in popular language, something contrary to the order of nature; and as the order of nature is merely the Will of Him who ordered nature, it would be contrary to God's Will. And we cannot ask God to act contrary to what we believe to be His Will.

Of course, it may be said that to pray for rain when otherwise it would not have rained really involves a miracle, for it is asking God to interfere with the ordinary course of nature. But here everything depends on the saving clause *when otherwise it would not have rained*. If we knew this for certain, it would be wrong to pray for rain; not knowing it for certain, it is not wrong. And as we do know for certain that water will not run uphill without a miracle, it is always wrong to pray for that. In the same way we may pray for fruitful crops, because it is plainly God's Will that mankind should be nourished; but we may not pray to be able to live without food, since this is plainly not God's Will. Of course, in the Old Testament miraculous signs were often prayed for, but only by persons who acted under Divine guidance; and this affords no argument for our doing so.

(3.) *Practical objection.*—Lastly, it is said that, even admitting the credibility of prayers being answered, yet we have abundant evidence that, as a matter of fact, they never

are ; in other words, that prayer at the present day is *useless*. Now, in discussing this objection, there are some obvious difficulties ; for it is impossible, from the nature of the case, either to prove or disprove that a particular event happened in consequence of some prayer. The effect of prayer, if it has any, is as a means of influencing the Deity, and therefore the only possible proof would be a statement by the Deity Himself that it actually does influence Him ; so that the testimony of God is the only possible *proof* of the efficacy of prayer. That the Bible contains what appears to be such testimony is plain ; but as the accuracy of this is the very point in dispute, it cannot be appealed to here. We can therefore only judge from indirect evidence, which in the present case is not decisive either way.

Now, in the first place, no one asserts that *all* prayers are answered. There are various *conditions* which have to be fulfilled, many of which are obvious, and apply equally to prayers to an earthly ruler. For instance, a person must not only believe in God, but also in His power and willingness to answer prayers ; and the answer must be of such a kind that he may legitimately pray for it. Moreover, the petitioner must be trying to lead such a life as God wishes him to lead, and also be honestly exerting himself to gain the required end ; for prayer cannot be looked upon as a substitute for work. Indeed, the very fact of a man not exerting himself shows that he cannot be in earnest about his prayer.

And this prevents our deciding the question by *experiment*, as is sometimes urged. Why not, it is said, settle the question once for all by a test case ? But this is impossible, since in the vast majority of cases we cannot say whether these conditions are fulfilled or not ; and even if we could, it would still be impracticable. For prayer is the earnest entreaty that God would grant something we earnestly desire ; and if used as an experiment, it ceases to be genuine prayer altogether. And even an earthly ruler would have too much self-respect to answer prayers made in such a spirit. It may also be added that some uncertainty as to prayers being answered is obviously the most suited to mankind ; since, if they were

always answered, we should neglect the ordinary means of procuring what we want, while if they never were most men would give up praying; though it is a strange anomaly that some men will continue to pray, or at least say prayers, without ever receiving an answer, or even expecting one.

But it is further urged that though we cannot decide by experiment, we can by *observation*. But the facts adduced can be explained on both theories. For instance, daily prayer is made that the sovereign may have a long life; and yet it is said statistics show that the lives of sovereigns are not, as a rule, longer than those of other persons. But for all we know, the immense cares and troubles of a sovereign's life might naturally make it much shorter than the average, and the prayers may have had the effect of preventing this. Or, again, to take another example, suppose an epidemic breaks out, and prayer is at once made that it may cease; but instead of ceasing, it continues for a week and kills a hundred persons. How do we know that but for the prayers it might not have continued for a month, and killed a thousand persons? And the same argument applies in every case. Indeed, in this respect the subject resembles the controversy between human freedom and necessity, and every event can be consistently explained on either theory.

Against these various objections must be weighed the fact that an immense number of men of many ages and countries, and of undoubted intelligence and integrity, have asserted that their prayers have been answered. And the cumulative value of this evidence is very great; and even in single cases, assuming a man's honesty and intelligence are admitted, he must be the best judge as to whether the event occurred in answer to his prayer or not. Of course, to those who possess it, the conviction that certain events happened, not accidentally, as we should say, but in answer to some prayer, is absolutely convincing. It resembles in this respect the conviction that a man's acts are determined by his free will, and not of necessity.

Having now decided that there is nothing *incredible* in prayers being answered, that they are not *wrong*, while those

who ought to know best assert that they are not *useless*, it is plain that no argument against the Jewish religion can be sustained on this subject. And that is the question we are considering. We are not appealing to answers to prayer as having any evidential value, which in the vast majority of cases they have not, but merely showing that, according to both science and experience, the subject is an open one.

(B.) THE CHARACTER ASCRIBED TO GOD.

We pass on now to the character ascribed to God in the Old Testament. The objections to be considered here may be conveniently classed under the two heads of mental and moral; and having discussed these, we will see what counter-arguments there are on the other side.

(a.) *Mental difficulties.*

These are all reducible to one, which is that the conception of God is intensely *anthropomorphic*. By this is meant that the Deity is represented as a great Man, with human form, feelings, attributes, and imperfections. Thus He has hands, arms, eyes, ears, and an audible voice; He is at times glad or sorry, angry or jealous; He moves about from place to place; and sometimes repents of what He has done, thus showing, it is urged, a want of foresight on His part. All this is plainly inconsistent with the character of the immaterial, omnipresent, omniscient God of nature. The answer to this objection is twofold.

In the first place, it is almost impossible for the human mind to form a conception of the Deity which is not to some extent anthropomorphic, which merely means human. For a moment's reflection will show that we are bound to use *representative terms* when speaking of the Deity. And if such terms are used at all, those drawn from *human* analogies are not only the easiest to understand, but are also the least inappropriate, since, as we have shown, man resembles God in being a personal and moral being; and therefore likening God to man is not so degrading as likening Him to natural forces without volition or consciousness. By a representative term, as said in the last chapter, is meant a term which is not strictly speaking true, but which represents the truth to

man in such a way that he can approximately understand it. And in the vast majority of cases the meaning is obvious at first sight, while in others it can easily be found. Such expressions, then, are merely representative descriptions drawn from human analogies which cannot be pressed literally. And considering the class of persons addressed, it is probable that philosophical language, which we might think less inappropriate, would have been unintelligible to them, and would therefore have rendered the revelation of no use at the time.

Secondly, it is plain that the Jewish writers themselves quite understood that these terms were only representative ones, and did not, strictly speaking, express the truth. This is clear from the fact that the same writers who use them—and they occur all through the Old Testament down to the latest book<sup>1</sup>—describe the Deity elsewhere in the most exalted language, as will be shown later on. And this is strongly confirmed by the very remarkable fact that the Jews, unlike other ancient nations, had no material *idol* or representation of their Deity. Inside both the tabernacle and the temple there was the holy of holies with the mercy-seat, but no one sat on it. An empty throne was all that the shrine contained. Their Jehovah was essentially an invisible God, who could not be represented by any human or other form; and this alone seems a sufficient answer to the charge of anthropomorphism.

(b.) *Moral difficulties.*

In the next place, it is urged that, from a moral point of view, God's character in the Old Testament is very defective. And considering that our moral sense of right and wrong was implanted by God, any difficulty of this kind is of great importance. But yet difficulties abound. Sometimes God is represented as acting in a manner which we should think unjust; sometimes as ordering what appear to be wrong acts; at other times as approving of wicked men; and even in His own laws as sanctioning customs which are now universally regarded as wrong. We will consider these four subjects in turn.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Mal. 3. 8, 17.

(1.) *God's alleged injustice.*—The most important instance of this refers to the case of *Eve*. God, it is said, is recorded as punishing the whole human race with death and expulsion from Eden for the trivial sin of a single woman. But to begin with, a great part of this objection rests on a few verses, the meaning of which is at least open to dispute. And it is unfairly stated: Adam was guilty as well as Eve, and Genesis nowhere says that their posterity died in consequence. No doubt their own death seems to have been a punishment for their sin; and hence, as their posterity have both sinned and died, we may perhaps look upon the one as the penalty for the other. But this merely means that man is not allowed to live more than a certain number of years in this world; and there is no injustice in this, for he has no right to live at all.

And then as to the *expulsion* from Eden. It did not involve any actual suffering, but merely the forfeiting of some undeserved privileges; and where is the hardship in this? Suppose a man was selected by an earthly sovereign, without any merit on his part, and given large estates on certain conditions, which he failed to fulfil, and the sovereign then confiscated the estates. Would it be fair to call this injustice to all the man's descendants? And the cases are very similar. Moreover, God, as the Author of nature, acts in the same manner, for He frequently makes a child suffer for his father's sins, as in the case of hereditary diseases. Indeed, it is a universal law that children suffer for the sins of their parents, just as they benefit from their virtues.

And then as to *Eve's sin being trivial*. No doubt it seems so; but if the history of the human race is at all like that of an individual, we could hardly expect it to be otherwise. A child's *first sin* has seldom anything heroic about it, but generally consists of some trifling act of disobedience, not very unlike what is recorded of *Eve*. Moreover, her sin was in a certain sense worse than any other sin can be, for it was made in what was till then a sinless nature. It was the first time that a human will set itself in opposition to the Divine Will, and we have no means of estimating the magnitude

of this crime; while, by the ordinary law of heredity, we should expect all Eve's descendants to inherit this partially sinful nature, and in this way to suffer for her sin.

(2.) *His ordering wicked deeds.*—And next as to God's ordering men to commit what appear to be serious crimes. In all cases of this kind it is important to distinguish between a man's personal acts and his official ones. At the present day the judge who condemns a criminal and the executioner who hangs him are not looked upon as murderers. And the same principle applies among uncivilised nations. If the ruler of a country decides that a man is worthy of death, and thereupon sends some one to kill him, his doing so is not a murder in the ordinary sense. It is merely carrying out the command of the sovereign, which may or may not be justified. Now there is not in the Old Testament a single instance of a man in his *personal* capacity being commanded by God to do what we should consider a wrong act. The apparent exception, in regard to the sacrifice of Isaac, will be considered later on. The Israelites are represented as living under the immediate rule of God Himself; and when a man, or body of men, had to be punished for their crimes, God commanded some prophet or king, or perhaps the whole people, to carry out the sentence. And of course, if they failed to do so, even from kindness of heart, they were blamed, just as we should blame a hangman at the present day who failed to do his duty.

Bearing this in mind, we will now consider the example most often objected to, that of the *extermination of the Canaanites*. Here, it is urged, God ordered the Israelites to make an unprovoked and murderous attack on some neighbouring tribes, and evidently approved of their doing so. But as far as the *Canaanites* were concerned, there is very little doubt that they thoroughly deserved their fate. They appear to have practised every form of wickedness; and though of course only the adults could have been guilty, it would have been no kindness to save the children if all the adults were killed. While, as nations were then in a constant state of hostility, there was nothing unusual in commencing war without waiting, as at present, for some convenient pretext.

And then as to the *Israelites*. It is clearly laid down that they were only acting as God's ministers, and they were told so in the plainest terms; while they were warned that if they behaved as badly as the Canaanites, God would have them exterminated too.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the destruction of the whole people was a valuable *object-lesson*, showing the abhorrence God had for such wickedness. And as in those days no distinction was made between evil and evil men, and the idea of loving the sinner and hating the sin was unknown, it was doubtless the most suitable means of enforcing this truth. The *Israelites* were thus deeply impressed with the guilt of sin, and with faith in the true God who alone enabled them to overcome their enemies, as well as being preserved from their evil influence. And if God wished to establish them as the guardians of the true religion, these were the very points they had to be taught. On the whole, then, they were merely God's agents in carrying out a command which was highly beneficial to themselves, and probably not unjust to their enemies. And viewed in this light, the difficulty is reduced to very small proportions, even if it does not disappear altogether.

(3.) *His approving of wicked men*.—The next class of objections is, that God is frequently represented as approving of men who committed the greatest crimes, such as Jacob and David. But this is easily answered, since approving of a man does not involve approving of *everything* he does. The case of David affords a convincing example of this; for though he is represented as a man after God's own heart, yet we are told that God was so extremely displeased with one of his acts that He punished him for it severely.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in estimating a man's character, his education and surroundings have always to be taken into account. If the conduct of one man living in an immoral age is far better than that of his contemporaries, he may be worthy of commendation, though similar conduct at the present day might not deserve it.

And if it be asked what there was in the character of these

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Lev. 18. 28; Deut. 9. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. 12. 14.



men, and many others, to counterbalance their obvious crimes, the answer is plain: it was their intense and unflinching belief in the spiritual world. The existence of One Supreme God, and their personal responsibility to Him, were realities to them all through life. They believed that God had specially revealed His Will to them, and they honestly tried to carry it out; and therefore, in spite of many faults, they were, on the whole, worthy of commendation.

Hence we need not discuss all these cases in detail, but will select a single example, that of *Jacob*, which is often thought to present special difficulties. Now Jacob is represented as a mean, treacherous man; while his brother *Esau* appears to have been the very opposite—if anything, too trustful and confiding. And yet God not only permitted Jacob to succeed by his deceitfulness, but is represented as actually loving Jacob though hating *Esau*.<sup>1</sup> But no one supposes that God loved Jacob in consequence of his treachery, but in spite of it. And even his treachery was due to a good motive—his intense longing for the Divine blessing, which *Esau* appears to have valued but slightly. And though God allowed him to succeed in this respect, his life was undoubtedly a miserable one; while his deceitfulness seems to have been specially and appropriately punished, since he himself was deceived by his mother, his uncle, his brother, and his children.<sup>2</sup>

There is, however, one case in which the above argument will not apply, since God seems to have approved of the crime itself, and this is the well-known instance of *Jael*. She, it will be remembered, treacherously murdered *Sisera*, between whom and her family there was no war; and yet God seems to have warmly approved of this very act.<sup>3</sup> Some critics, it is true, do not consider that the verse implies God's approval at all; but it certainly seems to do so to the ordinary reader. And though it cannot be altogether justified to our moral sense, the difficulties can be greatly lessened.

For the death of *Sisera* cannot be considered apart from its surroundings. It was merely one act in the war against the

<sup>1</sup> Mal. 1. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 27. 45; 29. 25; 32. 6; 37. 32; 47. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Judges 5. 24.

Canaanites, and, like many acts in modern warfare, cannot be justified by itself. Sisera was evidently an important man, and his escape would doubtless have involved fresh battles and bloodshed. Any one therefore who killed him would have deserved a blessing. The special virtue in Jael's doing it was that she was not an Israelite, and was therefore under no obligation to kill Sisera, who, moreover, appears to have been her personal friend. Yet knowing that he was God's enemy, she did not hesitate to do so. It was placing duty before personal friendship, much as Brutus did in Roman history, who sentenced his own sons to death. And then, as to the manner of Sisera's death, though repugnant to our ideas, it was doubtless in accordance with the savage customs of those days, and evidently excited no horror at the time, or it would not have been so praised by Deborah, nor would her song have been inserted in the Book of Judges. Moreover, a woman like Jael could hardly have killed Sisera openly; she must have done it by treachery, or not at all. All this taken together reduces the difficulty a good deal.

(4.) *His sanctioning wicked customs.*—We have, lastly, to consider a moral objection of a different character. It is that many of the *Laws*, which are stated in the Pentateuch to have been delivered by God Himself, sanction customs which are now universally regarded as wrong.

The most important of these is that of *human sacrifice*; but it is extremely doubtful whether the passages relied on do sanction this custom.<sup>1</sup> These texts are quite insufficient to establish the point, considering the minuteness with which the various sacrifices are described, and yet without any reference to these. Moreover, in other places it is clearly laid down that the first-born of men are never to be sacrificed, but are always to be redeemed; while human sacrifices among other nations are strongly condemned, in one passage Jehovah expressly saying that they were not to be offered to Him.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, further urged that we have three actual instances of such sacrifices in the case of the seven grandsons of Saul, the

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 22. 29, 30; Lev. 27. 28, 29.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 13. 13; Num. 18. 15; Deut. 12. 31

daughter of Jephthah, and Isaac.<sup>1</sup> But the former was not a human sacrifice at all in the ordinary sense of the term; it was merely punishing the grandsons of Saul for his crimes, in which they may have participated.

With regard to *Jephthah*, when he made his vow he evidently had no idea that it would involve the sacrifice of his daughter. But having made it, he determined to keep it; and during the two months which intervened no one seems to have tried to dissuade him from it. This certainly shows that human sacrifices were not regarded with the same abhorrence then as they are now; but it does not show that they were ever ordered by God, or in any way acceptable to Him.

In the case of *Isaac* we have the one solitary instance in which God did order a human sacrifice; but this is worthless as an argument, since He specially intervened to prevent the order being carried out. And the whole affair, the command and the counter-command, must of course be taken together. It was required to test Abraham's faith to the utmost, and as he most valued his son he was ordered to offer him. But when his faith was found equal to the trial God interposed, as He had of course intended doing all along, to prevent Isaac from being actually slain. It may also be added that human life was not then considered as sacred as it is now. Children were universally regarded as property, and at the absolute disposal of their parents; and therefore the command, 'however distressing to Abraham's heart, would have formed no difficulty to his conscience.' We have hence no instance of a deliberate human sacrifice in the whole course of Jewish history before or after the Exodus, and this affords further evidence against interpreting these doubtful laws as if they ordered such sacrifices.

With regard to the other practices, such as *slavery*, *polygamy*, and *trial by ordeal*, it is undisputed that they were recognised by the Mosaic laws, and also that they are quite opposed to our modern ideas of right and wrong. But it must be remembered that none of these practices were insti-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. 21. 9; Judges 11. 39; Gen. 22.

tuted by the laws. The Pentateuch 'neither commands them nor commends them;' it merely mentions them, and, as a rule, to guard against their abuse. Take, for instance, the case of slavery. The custom was, and had been for ages, universal. All the Mosaic laws did was to recognise its existence and to provide certain safeguards. Thus kidnapping was made a capital offence;<sup>1</sup> while the slaves, or rather *servants*, of the Israelites were undoubtedly well off in many respects, as is clear from the fact of their sometimes preferring to remain than to go free. The one exception to their good treatment is not hard to explain.<sup>2</sup> Murder or intentional killing was a capital offence among the Israelites, while manslaughter or unintentional killing involved no punishment at all. If a master punished his servant so that he died at the time, it was considered murder; but if he did not die till some days afterwards, it was looked upon as manslaughter, as evidently the master had not intended to kill him.

On the other hand, many *worse customs* existed at the time which the Jewish laws did rigorously forbid, even to the extent of making them capital crimes.<sup>3</sup> The case then stands thus:—At the time of the Exodus society was in an extremely low moral state. Many of its worst customs were absolutely forbidden by the laws; others were sanctioned, though in a mitigated form. While at the same time a code of morals was introduced, summed up in the Decalogue, of such excellence that it has been practically accepted by the civilised world ever since.

(c.) *Counter-arguments.*

Having now discussed at some length the alleged mental and moral difficulties as to God's character in the Old Testament, it is only fair to see what can be said on the other side. And much indeed may be said; for the Jewish conception of the Deity, when considered as a whole, and apart from these special difficulties, was one of the loftiest ever formed by man. Of course, only a few texts can be referred to here, since to give the evidence in full would involve quoting a

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 21. 16; Deut. 24. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 21. 20, 21.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, Lev. 18-20.

large part of the Old Testament. But these sample texts will, if any one takes the trouble to look them out, be amply sufficient.

To begin with, the Jews firmly believed in *Monotheism*, or the existence of One Supreme God. This was the essence of their religion. It is stamped on the first page of Genesis; it is implied in the Decalogue; it occurs all through the historical books; and it is emphasised in the Psalms and Prophets. They were never without it, and it made them into a nation.<sup>1</sup> And in this Monotheism the Jews stood alone among the surrounding nations. Some others, it is true, believed in a God who was more or less Supreme; but they always associated with him a variety of lesser deities, which really turned their religion into Polytheism. With the Jews it was not so. Their Jehovah had neither rivals nor assistants. He was the one and only God; and as for the so-called gods of other nations, they looked upon them as either non-existent or utterly contemptible, and even ridiculed the idea of their having the slightest power.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, it should be noticed that even the great problem of the *Existence of Evil*, and the frequent disproportion between virtue and prosperity, never led the Jews, as it did some other nations, into Dualism, or the belief in an independent Evil Power. Difficult as the problem was, the Jews never faltered in their belief that there was but one Supreme God, and that therefore everything that existed, whether good or evil, existed by His permission, and was in a certain sense His doing.<sup>3</sup> But this is not all, for the Jews ascribed to this Supreme God the very highest attributes. His name, Jehovah or *I Am*, implied the Self-Existent One,<sup>4</sup> and they exhausted language to proclaim His excellence.

They described Him as *Omnipotent*; the Creator, Preserver, and Possessor of all things, the Cause of all nature, the Sus-

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 4. 39; 2 Sam. 7. 22; 2 Kings 19. 15; Isa. 45. 5; Jer. 10. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 18. 27; 2 Kings 19. 18; Ps. 115. 4-8; Jer. 10. 3-5.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. 45. 7; Prov. 16. 4; Amos 3. 6; Job 2. 6.]

<sup>4</sup> Exod. 3. 14.

tainer of all life, Almighty in power, and with whom nothing is too hard.<sup>1</sup>

They described Him as *Omniscient* ; infinite in understanding, wonderful in counsel, perfect in knowledge, the Designer of all nature down to its smallest details, knowing and foreknowing even the thoughts of men.<sup>2</sup>

They described Him as *Omnipresent* ; filling heaven and earth, yet contained by neither, existing everywhere, and from whom escape is impossible.<sup>3</sup>

They described Him as *Eternal* ; the Eternal God, the Everlasting God, God from everlasting to everlasting, whose years are unsearchable, the First and the Last.<sup>4</sup>

They described Him as *Unchangeable* ; the same at all times, ruling nature by fixed laws, and with whom a change of purpose is impossible.<sup>5</sup>

And lastly, they described Him as in His true nature *Unknowable* ; far above human understanding, a hidden God, and showing but the outskirts of His ways.<sup>6</sup> This will be enough to show the lofty *mental* conception which the Jews formed of the Deity. And it may be added, after more than twenty centuries of progress we cannot improve upon it at the present day.

But now for their *moral* conception. They believed their God to be not only infinite in power and wisdom, but also, what is more remarkable, they ascribed to Him the highest moral character. He was not only a *beneficent* God, whose blessings were unnumbered, crowning the year with His goodness, and delighting in loving-kindness, but He was a *righteous* God also. His very Name was Holy. He was of purer eyes than to behold evil, and His intense hatred of

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 1. 1 ; Neh. 9. 6 ; Gen. 14. 22 ; Amos 5. 8 ; Job 12. 10 ; 1 Chron. 29. 11 ; Jer. 32. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 147. 5 ; Isa. 28. 29 ; Job 37. 16 ; Prov. 3. 19 ; Ps. 94. 9 ; Ezek. 11. 5 ; Ps. 139. 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. 23. 24 ; 1 Kings 8. 27 ; Prov. 15. 3 ; Ps. 139. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Deut. 33. 27 ; Gen. 21. 33 ; Ps. 90. 2 ; Job 36. 26 ; Isa. 48. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Mal. 3. 6 ; Ps. 148. 6 ; Num. 23. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Job 11. 7 ; Isa. 40. 28 ; 45. 15 ; Job 26. 14.

wickedness is emphasised all through, even to such an extent that at times it forms a difficulty, as in the extermination of the Canaanites.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the *goodness* they ascribed to God was a combination of beneficence and righteousness very similar to what we discussed in Chap. vi. Moreover, in this respect the God of the Jews was a striking contrast to the gods of the surrounding nations. We have only to compare Jehovah with Moloch or Baal, or with the Egyptian gods, such as Ptah and Ra, or with the classical gods, such as Jupiter and Saturn, and the superiority of the Jewish conception of the Deity is beyond dispute. In particular it may be noticed that other nations had the revolting habit of ascribing sexuality to their deities. Even the gods they worshipped as more or less supreme had their female companions. Thus we have Baal and Ashtaroth, Bel and Istar, Osiris and Isis, Zeus and Hera, Jupiter and Juno, and numbers of others. It is needless to point out that such an idea as this easily led to immorality being mixed up with religion, a vice from which the Jews were absolutely free.

Nor can it be said, as is sometimes alleged, that this high conception of the Deity was confined to the later period of Jewish history. For the above texts, which have been purposely selected from all through the Old Testament, show that in the older books of Genesis and Job, just as much as in the later Prophets, God is described as a Being, not only of immense power and wisdom, but also of the highest moral perfection. Indeed, Abraham himself, the remote ancestor of the Jews, seemed to look upon it as axiomatic that Jehovah, the *Judge of all the earth*, should *do right*.<sup>2</sup> No wonder, then, believing in such a perfect Being as this, the Jews, in contrast with most other nations, thought that their first and great commandment was to love God rather than to fear Him, and considered that they were each individually responsible to God for their conduct; that every sin was a sin against God,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 65. 11; Jer. 9. 24; Isa. 57. 15; Hab. 1. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 18. 25.

who was a searcher of hearts and the impartial Judge of all men.<sup>1</sup> So much then, for the Jewish conception of the Deity when considered as a whole and apart from special difficulties.

Now what is all this but to say that the Jewish God, Jehovah, was the true God, the God of Natural Theology, the Being who is all-powerful, all-wise, and all-good, and whose existence and attributes have been discussed in the earlier chapters of this Essay. In short, the Jewish religion was *Natural Theology*, with some additional, though not necessarily inconsistent, rites; and this cannot be said of other ancient religions.

And it may be noticed in passing that Natural Theology also has its moral difficulties, since such events as earthquakes and plagues have often been urged against the goodness of God with much greater force than anything which occurs in the Bible. But in each case we infer God's character from the vast majority of facts, and then try to find some explanation for the small minority. And, as we have seen, such explanations are not, as a rule, hard to find in regard to the moral difficulties of the Old Testament.

The idea, then, that the character ascribed to God in the Old Testament renders the Jewish religion incredible, or even improbable, is out of the question. Difficulties there may be here and there, but they sink into utter insignificance when contrasted with the moral excellence ascribed to God in so many places. Indeed, it is only the fact of their being at variance with this general excellence which makes them difficulties; they would not be worth mentioning in most other religions. Nor was this higher conception of the Deity the result of the Jews being a more advanced nation than those around them, for it was precisely the opposite. In the arts both of peace and war they were vastly inferior to the great nations of antiquity, but in their conception of the Deity alone they were vastly superior; or, as it has been otherwise

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 6. 5; Eccles. 12. 14; Gen. 39. 9; 1 Chron. 28. 9; Job 34. 19.



expressed, they were men in religion, though children in everything else.

And this appears to many to be a strong argument *in favour* of their religion. For unless it was revealed to them by God Himself, how did the Jews alone among ancient nations arrive at the true conception of the Deity? And unless they were in some peculiar sense God's people, how is it that they alone worshipped Him? And this argument is strongly confirmed by their remarkable history. For centuries the Jews, though scattered throughout the world, have been held together by their religion. If this was, as far as it went, the true religion, the phenomenon is to some extent explicable; but if their religion was nothing better than other ancient and false religions, it is hopelessly inexplicable.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

It is scarcely necessary to give a summary of the arguments in this book. Suffice it to say that in the last four chapters we have shown that there are strong reasons for thinking that the *origin* of the Jewish religion was attested by miraculous signs; that its *legislation* was of Divine institution; that its *history* was also attested by miraculous signs; and that the account of the *Creation* was Divinely revealed. And it should be noticed that each of these arguments is independent of the others. We have not, for instance, assumed the Divine origin of the religion when arguing about its legislation or its history, nor any of these when discussing the first chapter of Genesis. Thus the evidence is all cumulative, and far more than sufficient to outweigh the antecedent improbability of the religion discussed in Chap. ix., which is the only important argument on the other side.

Moreover, we know so little as to why man was created at all, or what future God intended for him, that it is not easy to decide whether the Jewish religion is so very improbable after all. On the other hand, the evidence in its favour is plain and direct. It is not only good of its kind, but is of such a kind as we should expect if the religion were true. No final conclusion, however, can be come to at present, because one important question has been intentionally omitted:

this is the retrospective bearing of Christianity on the Jewish religion. Christianity, whether true or false, is so intimately connected with the earlier religion, that no final conclusion can be come to regarding the one without considering the other also. All, then, that we can decide at present is that the *Jewish Religion is probably true.*

BOOK IV  
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

CHAPTER XV

THAT THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS CREDIBLE

By the Christian Religion is meant the three Creeds.

(A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

(1.) Its meaning—the analogy of man ; (2.) it is not incredible for several reasons ; (3.) nor inconsistent with the Jewish religion.

(B.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION.

(1.) The philosophical objections, none of which are insuperable. (2.) The alleged motive ; God, it is said, loves man, and wishes man to love Him ; and this is not improbable for several reasons.

(C.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

The common objections do not apply because of the *willingness* of the Victim. (1.) As to the Victim Himself, this does away with the injustice altogether ; (2.) as to the Judge, it appeals not to His justice but to His mercy ; (3.) and as to the sinner, it has no demoralising tendency.

(D.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

Difference between resurrection and resuscitation.

(a.) Christ's resurrection not incredible, for we have no experience to judge by.

(b.) Man's resurrection not incredible, for the same body does not involve the same molecules.

(c.) The final state of the wicked : only three possible theories, their (1.) endless misery, (2.) endless happiness, (3.) annihilation ; all of which seem unlikely.

(E.) CONCLUSION.

Four important considerations which show that the Christian religion, though improbable, is certainly not incredible.

WE pass on now to the *Christian Religion* ; and as this term is used by different writers in a variety of senses, it will be necessary to explain exactly what is meant by it. Now by

the Christian religion is meant in this Essay the facts and doctrines contained in the *Three Creeds*, commonly called the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian. And, of course, before discussing the evidence for and against its truth, we must first examine its credibility, so that in this chapter we shall deal chiefly with objections to Christianity. Now, its four great and characteristic doctrines are those of the *Trinity*, the *Incarnation*, the *Atonement*, and the *Resurrection*; and we will examine each in turn, and then conclude with a few general remarks. We are purposely leaving the statements in the Athanasian Creed, as to the great importance of believing these doctrines, till Chap. xxiv., when we shall have decided whether the doctrines themselves are true.

(A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

In the first place, the Christian religion differs from all others in its idea of the nature of God. According to Christianity, the Deity exists in some mysterious manner as a *Trinity of Persons*, each of whom is by Himself God; and yet together they are not Three Gods, but *One God*. This doctrine is stated at length in the Athanasian Creed, and defined with all attainable exactness. And we will first consider its meaning, then its antecedent probability or otherwise, and lastly its connection with the Jewish religion.

(1.) *Its meaning.*—It is scarcely necessary to refute the common misconception that the doctrine amounts to a contradiction in terms, and is therefore impossible. It does nothing of the kind. The Creed nowhere asserts that there are Three Persons and yet but One Person, or that there are Three Gods and yet but one God, which would be a contradiction in terms. What it does say is that there are Three Persons, each of whom is God, and yet but One God; and this is only a mystery.

The analogy of man himself may help to make this plain, though any analogy from a finite to an Infinite Being is necessarily imperfect. Still this is a peculiarly appropriate one, since both Natural Theology and the Jewish religion recognise the partial resemblance between man and his Maker. The former shows that man resembles God in that he is a

personal and moral being, possessing a known freedom of action, and distinguishing right from wrong, and is perhaps the only other personal or moral being in the universe; while the latter positively asserts that man was originally made in the image of God. What then do we know about man? We know that he possesses a *compound* nature, since, as before shown, his physical, mental, and moral attributes seem so distinct that he must certainly have two, and probably three parts—a body, mind, and spirit. Now each of these components may in a certain sense be described separately as *man*, and yet together they do not constitute three men, but one man. The tripartite existence of man is therefore in a certain sense *triune*, and it seems a real, though of course most inadequate, analogy of the alleged Triune existence of God. While, however, man has three substances, body, mind, and spirit, united in a single person, the Deity exists as Three Persons, each partaking of the one Divine substance or essence; and therefore, though each is separately God, there is yet but One God. Such an Existence, whatever difficulties it may present, is certainly not a contradiction in terms; so this preliminary objection may be dismissed at once.

Of course, many other analogies have been suggested for the doctrine of the Trinity. Perhaps one of the least inadequate is that of solar *light*, *colour*, and *heat*. Each is in a certain sense solar radiance, and each is different from the others; and yet they are so closely united that together they are but one solar radiance. Each is also coextensive with the others in time and space. There never was a time when there was sunlight without colour and heat; and if one is eternal and omnipresent, so are the others. Each is also in its true nature unknowable, and each is, as a rule, invisible. But just as solar colour may be manifested to us as the rainbow at a particular time and place, and yet be omnipresent all the time, so Christians believe that God the Son was manifested to the world at a particular time and place, yet remaining omnipresent all the time. And just as heat, though invisible, pervades the whole universe, and is the source of all life, so

Christians believe that the Holy Spirit, though invisible, is omnipresent, and, as the Creed says, the Giver of Life. And the analogy could be illustrated in many other details if necessary.

(2.) *Its credibility.*—But still it may be said the Christian doctrine is so inconceivable as to be practically incredible. But the nature of God is anyhow almost inconceivable, even as simple Theism. This has been already considered in Chap. iv., where we decided that though we had or might have ample means of knowing what God was *in His relation to us* as our Creator and Judge, yet as to His real nature we knew next to nothing. Nor is this surprising when we remember that the only being who in any way resembles God is man; and that man's nature, notwithstanding our opportunities of studying it, still remains a mystery.

Now Christianity does attempt to state what the Deity is *in Himself*, and apart from His relation to us; and that this should be to a great extent inconceivable to our minds seems a necessity of the case. Indeed, any doctrine of the nature of God which we could thoroughly understand would be self-condemned, for an Infinite Being must be to a great extent beyond human understanding. The mysteriousness of the Christian doctrine is therefore, if we may use the expression, befitting the mysteriousness of its Subject. And it is certainly not incredible on this account.

But next we must ask, is the Trinitarian doctrine really more difficult to believe than the Unitarian? There are certainly some reasons for thinking the contrary. The doctrine of the Trinity, it has been often said, is addressed *to the reason*; and when carefully considered, it seems to many to be less difficult to believe than simple Theism.

In the first place, the Christian doctrine meets to a great extent what is perhaps the greatest difficulty of Theism, that of conceiving of an Infinite God who is yet *Personal*. For, as shown in Chap. iv., the two ideas seem antagonistic. An eternal Personality seems to require a something else eternal, from which it separates itself; and 'Natural Theology cannot supply this, though Christianity can.' In other words, on the

Trinitarian hypothesis God is complete in Himself; whereas on the Unitarian theory we have either a solitary Being dwelling alone from all eternity, or else we must make the universe itself eternal to be His companion.

Again, personality seems to imply not only a power to design, but also a capacity of *social intercourse* of some kind. And hence all attributes involving personality can be more easily conceived of in a plurality of Persons, capable of mutual relations, than in a single unity. Take, for instance, the attribute of love. This, unless it is merely self-love, necessarily implies plurality—a person to love, and a person to be loved. So that if love has always been an attribute of the Deity, it necessitates some other Eternal, and therefore Divine, Person to be loved. And yet, when once we understand, even partially, the meaning of the term God, His omnipresence and omnipotence, it seems impossible that there can be more than one. We seem then forced into this dilemma: we must believe in a plurality of Eternal Persons, and yet in but one God; and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity seems the least difficult explanation.

But this is not all, for Natural Theology itself leads us to look upon the Deity under three distinct aspects. We may think of Him as the Eternal, Self-Existent One, the Absolute and Unconditioned of modern philosophy. Or we may think of Him as the Creator and Evolver of the Universe, the Upholder of each planet, the Designer of each plant; the Being by Whom the world was made, and Who perhaps will one day be its Judge. Or, again, we may think of Him in His relation to ourselves as a Divine Spirit, holding intercourse with our spirits, and speaking to us by our conscience. Now it is certainly easier to contemplate these three aspects of the Deity separately; and yet our reason compels us to acknowledge that the Persons we thus contemplate are but one God. And what is this but the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity?

Or, to otherwise express it, according to philosophy, the Deity is a *Transcendent* God, dwelling apart from Nature,

above and beyond the world. According to science, He is an *Immanent* God, dwelling within Nature, the Omnipresent but *Unknown* Power which is everywhere working. The former corresponds to the mechanical idea of the universe, regarding God as an Artificer who long ago made a perfect world, and has since left it to itself; the latter to the organic idea which looks upon God's relation to the universe as something like that of a man's soul to his body. The former leads to what is called *Deism*, the latter to *Pantheism* in its higher forms. And considering how strong a hold both these doctrines have had on the human mind in all ages, there is doubtless some truth in each. Christianity alone unites the two doctrines, and declares that God is both Transcendent and Immanent, as well as bearing some close relationship to ourselves.

Or, to repeat it once more in a slightly different form : there are, as is well known, three main arguments in favour of the existence of God. The first, or that from *Causation*, is derived from the universe requiring an external cause to account for it, and leads to the God of Philosophy. The second, or that from *Design*, leads to the ever-active God of Nature. While the third, or *Moral* argument, leads to the God of Conscience. Now each of these arguments has been already considered,<sup>1</sup> and each appears to be sound, and to require a distinct Divine Person; and yet it is obvious all the time that there can be but one God. And what, again, is this but the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity: the Father the Source of all, the Son by Whom all things were made, and the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits; and yet not three Gods, but one God?

It is not, of course, meant that the God of Philosophy, of Nature, and of Conscience correspond accurately with the Three Persons of the Christian Trinity, still less that the Christian doctrine could have been derived from any such speculations; but merely that when the two are compared there is seen to be a certain harmony between them, quite

<sup>1</sup> Chaps. i., iii., and vi.



sufficient of itself to prevent the Christian doctrine from being thought incredible.

(3.) *Its connection with the Jewish religion.*—We have lastly to consider whether the Christian doctrine is inconsistent with the Jewish religion. To begin with, there is a strong probability that it is not, from the simple fact that the earlier religion is universally asserted to be true by Christians. Of course, it may be said this only shows their inconsistency, but the presumption is plainly the other way.

In the next place, the Christian doctrine does not involve by hypothesis anything at variance with the *Unity* of the Deity, and the frequent assertions of this in the Old Testament are therefore no difficulty. It may, however, be fairly urged that if the Trinitarian doctrine is true, it is unlikely that God, in making a revelation to the Jews, should have laid so much stress on the Unity, and said nothing about the Trinity. But the explanation is not far to seek. Most likely the Jews were not sufficiently advanced to understand such a complicated doctrine, and any revelation of it would only have led them into Polytheism. Nor is there anything unlikely in God's only revealing part of the truth at once. The history of the human race has often been likened to that of an individual; and in teaching children we do not teach them the entire truth at once, but only by slow degrees, beginning with what they can easily understand. And why should not God, in teaching men the truth about Himself, have adopted the same gradual method, the earlier revelations not being incorrect, but merely incomplete?

Lastly, in several places the Jewish religion does seem to hint at some plural nature in the Deity; indeed, the very word for God in the Old Testament is a plural word, *Elohim*, though, strange to say, it takes a singular adjective and verb. Attempts have, of course, been made to explain away the significance of this, by regarding the word as a survival from some previous polytheistic religion, or else as being merely the plural of majesty, a sort of royal *We*. But even if so, and it is most unlikely, the fact still remains that the Jews used

a plural word for God with a singular verb. The same word, it may be added, when used of false gods takes a plural verb.

Moreover, the Deity is at times represented as speaking in the plural number. For instance, He says, *Let us make man in our image*, as if consulting with other Persons of the Godhead; and considering that man has somehow or other been made with a plural nature, this is very significant. And just afterwards we read, "God made man in *His* own image;" thus showing a unity as well as a plurality in the Godhead. Another somewhat similar expression is, "Behold, the man is become as *one of us*." So again God is represented as saying, "Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *us*?" which also seems to indicate a plurality in unity; while the immediately preceding *thrice* "holy" points to this as being a Trinity.<sup>1</sup> The existence of these passages—and there are others like them, though less striking—is rendered all the more remarkable because of the strong Monotheism of the Jews. And they certainly show that the Christian doctrine is not inconsistent with their religion. Nor is there anything surprising in this, since Christianity is after all only a form of Monotheism, for it asserts that there is but one God. The opposite doctrine is Tritheism, or that there are three Gods, which is expressly repudiated in the Creed.

On the whole, then, we decide that the Christian doctrine is certainly credible, and perhaps slightly probable. Now, admitting this, nothing that can be stated about the *mutual relations* of the three Persons of the Godhead can be thought incredible, unless it is a contradiction in terms. There is therefore no difficulty in the use of the expressions *Father* and *Son*. These words, like the term *Person*, are no doubt very inadequate, and are not to be taken in their literal human sense, but rather in a metaphorical sense. But still, as far as they go, they express the idea of both Persons being of the same nature or *Substance*, and there is nothing incredible in this; on the contrary, it seems distinctly probable.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 1. 26; 3. 22; Isa. 6. 8.

(B.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION.

This doctrine is fully stated in the Creeds, which need not be quoted here; so we will first examine some philosophical objections, and then the alleged motive of the Incarnation.

(1.) *The philosophical objections.*—The first objection is that the Incarnation would be an *innovation* in the existence of God, Who is the changeless One. It would bring Him into relation with place and time, whereas it is urged He is omnipresent and always the same. Unchangeableness is His attribute, and is insisted on as such in the Jewish religion. On the other hand, the Incarnation implies that at some definite time a momentous change took place, and for ever afterwards God became different from what He had been for ever before. It would give us, as it were, a starting-point in time from which to measure the Eternal One. And then as regards place, why should this planet be the one chosen out of so many thousands for this event? And the more we consider the insignificance of this earth, and that the whole period of its existence is a mere speck in the ocean of time, the more does this objection seem insuperable.

That it is not really so is, however, obvious when we reflect that the above argument as to the unchangeableness of the Deity, and the impossibility of His becoming related to time or place would apply equally to the creation; and yet this is a fact which cannot be denied. Though eternal and omnipresent, it pleased the Deity to bring Himself into relation with time and place by originating the universe at a certain definite time and in a certain definite place. And this might equally well be called a starting-point in time from which to measure His existence. It is true that the creation of the world does not involve any change in God Himself, such as the Incarnation would; but as either event appears on antecedent grounds so extremely improbable, and yet we know the one to be true, we cannot think the other incredible.

The second objection is, that the Incarnation would involve such a confusion of natures as is incredible. A *compound Being*, it is said, who is both Divine and human at the same time, is inconceivable. But here the answer is obvious, and

is suggested by the Athanasian Creed. Man himself is a compound being; he is the union of at least two incongruous parts, a material body and an immaterial spirit, in a single person. And the Incarnation in which Christians believe is the union of the Divine nature and the human nature in a single Person. Both appear equally improbable to all antecedent reasoning; but as the one is actually true, the other is certainly not incredible.

The third and last of these objections refers to the miraculous *virgin-birth*. But if we admit the possibility of an Incarnation, no method of bringing it about can be pronounced incredible. The event, if true, is necessarily unique, and cannot be supposed to come under the ordinary laws of nature. While considering that one object of the alleged Incarnation was to promote moral virtues in man, such as purity, the virgin-birth was most suitable, and formed an appropriate beginning for a sinless life.

(2.) *The alleged motive*.—But we now come to a much more important point. Granting that the philosophical objections to the Incarnation are not insuperable, in other words, that the event is what we may call *mentally* credible, is it *morally* so? For if true, it must have been the most momentous event in the world's history; and can we imagine a sufficient reason for it? God does not act without motives, and can we suggest an adequate motive for the Incarnation? Now the alleged reason, indeed the fundamental axiom of Christianity, is that God loves man, and wishes man to love Him. Is this then incredible, or even improbable? Certainly not, for several reasons.

To begin with, we have already shown that God is a Personal and Moral Being, Who cares for the welfare of His creatures, more especially for man. And this, allowing for the imperfection of human language, may perhaps be described as God's *loving* man, since disinterested love for another cannot be thought an unworthy attribute to ascribe to the Deity. On the other hand, man is also a personal and moral being, able to some extent to reciprocate God's love. And to this must be added the fact that man, at least some men, do not seem altogether

unworthy of His love, while we certainly do not know of any other being who is more worthy of it. And therefore it cannot be thought unlikely that God should love man. The evidence we have may be slight, but it all points in the same direction.

Moreover, considering the admitted resemblance between God and man, the analogy of human parents loving their children is not inappropriate. Human parents often love their children intensely, and will sometimes even die for them; while, as a rule, the better the parents are the more they love their children, and this in spite of the children having many faults. Is it, then, unlikely that the Universal Parent may love His children also, and that human love may be but a reflection of this—a further application of the admitted law that man is made in the image of God? While, lastly, if we admit the truth of the Jewish religion, the question is settled, since the love of God for man is apparent all through the Old Testament.

Now, if it be granted that God loves man, we have plainly no means of estimating the *extent* of this love. But by comparing the other attributes of God, such as His wisdom and His power, with the similar attributes of man, we should expect God's love to be infinitely greater than any human love; so great indeed that it might perhaps induce Him to become man Himself, that He might the better win man's love. And it must be remembered that man's love, like his will, is *free*. God cannot force man to love Him, He can only induce him; and what inducement can be suggested more powerful than the Incarnation? The condescending love of Christ in His life, and still more in His death, forms an overpowering motive which, when once realised, has always been irresistible. Indeed, the passionate devotion of Christ's followers to their Master in all ages is a matter of history.

But more than this. Not only does the Incarnation afford the strongest possible motive for man to love God, but it *enables* him to do so in a way which nothing else could. Man, it is true, often longs for some means of intercourse or communion with the Deity, but yet this seems impossible.

The gulf which separates the Creator from the creature is infinite, and can never be bridged over by man, or even by an angel or intermediate being. A bridge must of necessity touch *both sides*; so if the gulf is to be bridged over at all, it can only be by One Who is at the same time both God and Man. The Incarnation thus brings finite man into relationship with the Infinite God, or, to otherwise express it, God is in a measure brought down to the level of man's understanding; so that man has no mere abstract and invisible Being to love, but a definite Person, Whose character he can appreciate and Whose behaviour he can to some extent follow. In short, the Incarnation presents man with a worthy Object for his love and devotion, and yet with an Object Whom he can partly at least understand and partly imitate. And he is thus able to become in a still truer sense a *child of God*, or, as it is commonly expressed, God became Man that man might become as far as possible like God.

And this leads us to another aspect of the Incarnation. Christ's life was meant to be an *example* to man, and it is clear that a *perfect* example could only be given by a Being who is both God and Man. For God alone is above human imitation, and even the best of men have many faults; so that from the nature of the case, Christ, and Christ alone, can present us with a perfect example, for being Man He is capable of imitation, and being God He is worthy of it.

Now what follows from this? If Christ's life was meant to be an example to man, it was essential that it should be one of *suffering*, or the example would have lost more than half its value. Man does not want to be shown how to live if his life is nothing but prosperity, but how to live in adversity, and how to suffer patiently. And the same argument applies throughout. The desertion of friends, the malice of enemies, and a cruel death are the occasional lot of all mankind. They are perhaps the hardest things a man has to bear in this world, and they have often had to be borne by the followers of Christ. Is it incredible, then, that He should have given them an example of the perfect way of doing so; gently rebuking His friends, praying for His murderers, and acting

throughout as only a perfect man would act? Of course, it may be said that such a life and death are degrading to the Deity; and no doubt they seem so. But, strictly speaking, suffering, if borne voluntarily and for the benefit of others, is not degrading, especially if the benefit could not be obtained in any other way.

When we consider all this, it is plain that many reasons can be given for such an Incarnation as Christians believe in. Of course, it may be replied that they are not adequate; but we have no means of knowing whether God would consider them adequate or not. His ideas are not like ours; for what adequate motive can we suggest for God's creating man at all, let alone all the lower animals? But yet He has done so. And having created man and given him free will, and man having misused his free will, all of which is admitted, that God should adopt some means to endeavour to win back man to Himself cannot be thought incredible. In the same way, to quote an old analogy, if an emperor founded a colony, and the inhabitants, even through their own fault, allowed the city to be taken, he would not let it remain in the hands of the enemy. It would be due to himself to preserve his own work, and, if possible, to remedy their neglect. And for all we know, God may have designed the Incarnation, leading up to the Atonement, as a *remedy* for man's sin. And assuming man to retain his free will, and not to be obliged to forsake sin, the remedy has doubtless been as successful as possible.

Of course, it may still be objected that if the foregoing reasons are really sufficient to account for the Incarnation, it ought to have taken place near the commencement of man's history. But we have very little to judge by, and that little does not support the objection. For in nature God seems always to work by the slow and tedious process of evolution, not attaining the results He wished for all at once, but by gradual development. And thus it is only natural that if He revealed Himself to man, it should be by the same method—at first indistinctly, then more clearly, and finally by becoming Man Himself.

According to Christians, the whole previous history of the world was really a preparation for the Incarnation. But only when the preparation was complete, *when the fulness of the time came*, as St. Paul expresses it,<sup>1</sup> did it take place. And it has certainly proved, as we should have expected, an epoch-making event. In all probability the history of the world will always be considered relatively to it in years B.C. and A.D. And very possibly it has a significance far beyond man, or even this planet. For by becoming man, God associated Himself with matter in its highest form, and the whole material universe must in a certain sense have been elevated in consequence. This, which has been called the *cosmic* significance of the Incarnation, is an interesting field of speculation, but need not be discussed here. On the whole, then, it is clear that, from a moral point of view, no less than from a mental point of view, the doctrine is not incredible, though it is no doubt very improbable.

(C.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

The Christian doctrine of the Atonement is that Christ's death was in some sense a *sacrifice* for sin, and thus reconciled (or made "at-one") God the Father and sinful man. And this doctrine, though not formally stated in the Creeds, is implied in the words, *Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven; was crucified for us, and Who suffered for our salvation.*

The chief objections to the doctrine are of course on moral grounds, and are generally urged in some such form as the following. The idea of atonement, it is said, or of one man being made to suffer for another, and thus appeasing the Deity, was well-nigh universal in early times, and is so still among savage nations. Such a sacrifice, however, which we may call a *substitution* sacrifice, is a great injustice to the *victim* who is sacrificed; ascribes a low and degraded character to God, who it assumes is a *Judge* that can be satisfied with the punishment of an innocent man in place of the guilty one; and is demoralising to the *sinner*, on whose behalf the sacrifice

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 4. 4.



is offered, allowing him to sin on with impunity, provided he can find another substitute when needed.

The answer to this objection is, that it takes no account of the most important item in the Christian doctrine, which is the *willingness* of the Victim. According to Christianity, Christ was a willing Sacrifice, a self-offered Victim, who freely laid down His life.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the human sacrifices above alluded to were not willing sacrifices. The victims had no option in the matter; nor indeed need they have had, as the principle of mere substitution does not require a voluntary sufferer, but only a sufferer. We will now see what difference this willingness of the victim makes in regard to the victim himself, the judge, and the sinner.

(1.) *As to the Victim.*—It is plain that his willingness does away with the injustice altogether. There is no injustice in accepting a volunteer for any painful office, provided he thoroughly knows what he is undertaking, for he need not undertake it unless he likes.

(2.) *As to the Judge.*—Next it will be seen that the willingness of the victim altogether changes the manner in which the sacrifice appeals to the judge. A mere *substitution* sacrifice appeals to his sense of *justice*, and endeavours to satisfy it by giving as far as possible a literal fulfilment of justice, modified only in the one respect of the punishment not being borne by the guilty person.

But a *willing* sacrifice appeals not to his justice, but to his *mercy*; it endeavours, so to say, to stimulate this element of mercy and to soften his heart. That it would have this effect in human cases is almost certain. If a judge had before him a criminal who well deserved punishment, but a good man came forward, and not only interceded for the prisoner, but was so devotedly attached to him as to offer to bear his punishment, this would certainly influence the judge in his favour. He would feel somewhat softened towards him, and more inclined to be merciful. This would, of course, depend greatly on the goodness of the mediator, for one criminal

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, John 10. 18.

interceding for another would not necessarily have any effect. But a good man, especially if he were the judge's own son, interceding for a criminal, would show that he was not so hopelessly bad after all. In short, justice and mercy, though undoubtedly hard to reconcile, are both facts of human nature; and it is also a fact of human nature that the voluntary suffering, or willingness to suffer, of a good man for a criminal whom he deeply loves does incline man to mercy rather than justice.

Now, of course, the value of this analogy depends entirely on the assumption that God has similar feelings to what we call justice and mercy. If He has not, it fails hopelessly; but if He has, though the analogy can prove nothing, it certainly tends to show that the doctrine of the Atonement is not incredible. Have we then any reason for thinking that God combines in their highest forms these two seemingly inconsistent attributes of justice and mercy? Certainly we have; for, as shown in Chap. vi., Natural Theology, not to mention the Jewish religion, leads us to ascribe to God precisely such a combination. As there shown, the suffering in this world forces us to conclude that the *goodness* of God was not simple *beneficence*, but beneficence combined with some other attribute which we called *righteousness*. And these general terms, when applied to the special case of judging sinners, closely correspond to mercy and justice. God, as we have seen, combines both these attributes, and a combination of both is required by the Christian doctrine. Mercy alone would have forgiven men without any atonement; justice alone would not have forgiven them at all. But God is both merciful and just, and therefore the idea that voluntary atonement might possibly incline Him to mercy rather than justice does not seem incredible.

And this is precisely the Christian doctrine. The mercy of God the Father is called out towards sinful man by Christ's generous sacrifice of Himself on man's behalf; so that, to put it shortly, *God forgives sins for Christ's sake*. Of course, individual texts may be quoted in support of other theories; but the idea that sins are forgiven certainly seems a fundamental one in the New Testament, and is also alluded to in the Apostles' Creed. Now, this very word *forgiveness* shows

that Christ's Atonement was not a mere substitution sacrifice, for then no forgiveness would have been necessary. If, for example, I owe a man £100, and a friend pays it for me, I do not ask the man to forgive me the debt; I have no need of any forgiveness. But if, instead of paying it, he merely intercedes for me, then the man may forgive me the debt for my friend's sake. And this corresponds to this aspect of the Christian doctrine; for the Atonement, like the Incarnation, is a many-sided doctrine, which can be regarded from various points of view.

It may still be objected that however noble it may have been for Christ to have offered Himself as a sacrifice for man, it hardly seems right for the offer to have been *accepted*. And this derives some support from human analogy, for we certainly should not admire an earthly judge who allowed an innocent man to suffer in place of the guilty one.

But in arguing from this analogy to the Christian doctrine, we must remember the mysterious union which exists between the Victim and the Judge. It is the Son Himself who, in a certain sense, by virtue of His unity with the Father, both offers and accepts the offer. He originates, carries out, and completes the work of Atonement. Of course, it may be said that this is only shirking a difficulty by having recourse to mysteries. But the answer is obvious. The mystery of the Atonement is an essential part of the doctrine. Christians do not believe in an atonement effected by any one who was not both God and Man. On the contrary, they believe that no one else could have effected it; and therefore in discussing the Christian doctrine we cannot argue as if the Mediator were only a man. Nor can we for a moment assume any divergence in will between the Persons of the Trinity. The love of the Father in giving His Son to be a sacrifice for man is emphasised in Scripture, just as much as the love of the Son in voluntarily becoming that sacrifice.

One more point has to be noticed under this head. Christ, by His becoming man and living a perfect life, was in a certain sense the true *representative* of the human race, and He suffered as such; so that to this extent there was a kind of

fulfilment of justice. Thus though He did not, strictly speaking, bear man's *punishment*, His sufferings and death procured man's pardon.

(3.) *As to the sinner.*—Lastly, as to the effect of the willingness of the victim on the sinner. Of course, on the mere substitution theory, justice would be satisfied, and a criminal might sin on as much as he liked, provided he could be sure of finding another substitute when necessary. But if the changed attitude of the judge is due, not to his justice being satisfied, but to his mercy being stimulated, this is plainly conditional on a *moral change* in the criminal himself. A good man suffering for a criminal would not alter our feelings towards him if he obstinately remained a criminal still, and expected the good man to suffer again when necessary. This is in exact harmony with the Christian doctrine, which is that sinners cannot expect to avail themselves of Christ's Atonement if they wilfully continue in sin; so that repentance is a necessary condition of forgiveness. This, it is plain, destroys altogether the objection that an atoning sacrifice has an immoral tendency on the sinners themselves; it has precisely the opposite effect.

And what we should thus expect theoretically is amply confirmed by experience. No one will deny that Christians in all ages have embraced the doctrine of the Atonement with the utmost devotion. They have emphasised it in their hymns to an exaggerated extent. They have asserted that it is the cause of all their joy in this world and all their hope for the next. And yet, so far from having had a bad influence, it has led them to the most noble and self-sacrificing lives. It has saved them from *sin*, and not only from the penalties of sin, and this is exactly what was required. The enormity of man's sin, and the misery it causes in the world, are but too evident apart from Christianity. And the Atonement was a 'vast remedy for this vast evil.' And if we admit the end, that man had to be redeemed from sin, impressed with the guilt of sin, and helped to resist sin, we cannot deny the suitability of the means, which has, as a matter of fact, so often brought it about.

This completes a brief examination of the moral objections to the Atonement. And while it is clear that the doctrine of atonement, as it existed among savage nations, was open to all these charges, it is equally clear that the Christian doctrine is not, since the willingness of the Victim makes the whole difference, whether we regard them as referring to the Victim himself, the Judge, or the sinner.

(D.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

The last great Christian doctrine is that of the Resurrection. According to Christianity, all men are to rise again, with their bodies partly changed and rendered incorruptible, though still the same ; and the Resurrection of Christ's Body was both a pledge of this, and also to some extent an example of what a risen body will be like. It is true all this is not stated in the Creeds ; but it is only fair to assume that the Resurrection there spoken of is what is described in the New Testament, and all through the New Testament the fact is emphasised that Christ is the *first-born* from the dead.<sup>1</sup> Now this word *first-born* implies, to begin with, that none had been so born before, the cases of Lazarus, &c., being those of *resuscitation*, and not *resurrection* ; they lived again to die again, and their bodies were unchanged. And it implies, secondly, that others would be so born afterwards, so that our risen bodies will resemble His. We will therefore consider first Christ's Resurrection, then man's resurrection, and lastly a particular part of this subject which presents great difficulties, the final state of the wicked.

(a.) *Christ's Resurrection.*

Now according to the Gospels, Christ's Risen Body combined material and immaterial properties in a very remarkable manner. It was not, as said before, a resuscitation of His natural body, but His rising again in a body which, though identical in some respects, was yet different in others. Thus He could be touched and eat food, and yet apparently pass through closed doors and vanish at pleasure ; and this is often thought to be incredible.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, 1 Cor. 15. 20 ; Col. 1. 18 ; Rev. 1. 5.

But though we know very little about *semi-spiritual* substances, that little is enough to show that the doctrine is not incredible. For the nearest approach to one of which we have any scientific knowledge is the luminiferous æther, and this also seems to combine spiritual and material properties in a remarkable manner. In some respects it resembles a solid rather than a gas, and is said to exert a pressure of several million tons on the square inch. And yet this medium, indefinitely harder than adamant, can pass through all material substances, and allows them to pass through it without any appreciable resistance. This fact certainly prevents us from saying that it is incredible that Christ's semi-spiritual body should pass through closed doors. Moreover, as regards His vanishing, the literal words are, *He ceased to be seen by them*, so that His appearances and disappearances may not have been by way of locomotion at all, but merely by His becoming visible or not to their eyes. And here again there is nothing incredible. Man, we know, does not see all that is to be seen even in nature, *e.g.*, the ultra-violet rays. And a slight alteration in the waves of light coming from a body would make it visible or not to the human eye; and it is out of the question to say that a spiritual body could not possibly produce such a change at pleasure.

It may of course be replied that these phenomena, though not perhaps incredible, are still most improbable; and no doubt they are. But what then? We have no adequate data to argue from. If God chose to assume a human body, and in it to suffer death, and then to rise again and live for ever afterwards in the same body, but somewhat spiritualised, it is only probable that its properties would be quite unlike those of an ordinary human body. We have no *experience* whatever to guide us, for the fact, if true, is necessarily unique. No doubt a certain amount of improbability attaches to it on that account; but assuming that the resurrection of Christ is otherwise credible, as it certainly is if we admit His incarnation and death, we cannot call it incredible merely because the properties of His risen body are alleged to be different

from those of ordinary human bodies, and in some respects to resemble those of spirits.

Before passing on, we may notice a difficulty which is sometimes made in regard to Christ's *Ascension into heaven*. No doubt, according to the Gospels, there was a visible ascent from the earth for a certain distance, which was of course to convince the Apostles that Christ would no longer be with them as before; and this presents no difficulty for a semi-spiritual body. But the difficulty is in regard to the term *heaven*. This, objectors say, is evidently thought to be some place above the earth where God lives, both from the expression *went up* to heaven, referring to the *Ascension*, and also from the clause in the Nicene Creed, *came down* from heaven; and the existence of such a material heaven is, they say, incredible.

But for all we know, such a heaven may exist on the satellites of some other solar system, where God may be pleased to specially manifest His presence, and where the phenomena of sin, pain, and death are unknown. This is one answer to the objection. But a more probable one is, that the statements in the Creed are not to be taken literally. Heaven may be merely the name for some unseen spiritual state, into which Christ passed when He left this earth; and the existence of such a state, perhaps pervading the whole universe, is certainly not incredible. Indeed, the luminiferous æther alone should convince us that our senses are not able to perceive everything that exists, even in our immediate vicinity. There is thus no great difficulty in regard to Christ's ascension into heaven.

(b.) *Man's Resurrection.*

Next as to man's resurrection. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the *body* must not be confused with the immortality of the *spirit*, discussed in Chap. vi., which is common to many religions, and is certainly not improbable. But two objections may be made to the resurrection of the body.

The first is, that it is *impossible*, since the human body decomposes after death, and its molecules may be subsequently

incorporated into other bodies. And thus, if all men were to rise again at the same time, the same molecules might have to be in two places at once. Now, if the identity of the body requires the same identical molecules to compose it, this might well seem impossible. But it does nothing of the kind. This is obvious when we reflect that the molecules composing a man's body are continually changing *during life*, and it is probable that every one of them is changed in a few years; and yet the identity of the body is not destroyed. This identity consists not in the identity of the molecules, but in their relative position and numbers; so that a man's body is in this respect like a whirlpool in a stream, the water composing which is continually changing, though the whirlpool itself remains. This removes at once the apparent impossibility of the doctrine.

Secondly, it may still be objected that the doctrine is extremely *improbable*. No doubt it seems so. But once more we have no sufficient data from which to judge. Certainly, that a man who has once lived should be raised to life again is not antecedently more improbable than that he should have lived at all. Again, apart from experience, what extreme improbability there would be that a seed when buried in the ground should develop into a plant. Indeed, the whole phenomena of life are so very mysterious that it is unsafe to argue as to what may or may not take place at some future time of which we have no experience whatever. An analogy from mathematics may help to emphasise this. Man's life may be compared to a *curve*, the full equation of which we do not know, but we know approximately its path between two ordinates close together, and we find it to be a very strange one. Now, from this it would be obviously unsafe to argue what the curve might or might not do at a distant ordinate, especially if on the other side of some critical point. Similarly, if man is really immortal, the period of his existence of which we have any experience is comparatively a mere speck of time, ended abruptly by death; and from this we cannot argue with any certainty as to what may or may not occur on the other side of that critical point.



And then as to the *condition* of man's risen body, that it should be partly spiritual, and thus resemble Christ's risen body, is distinctly probable. And just as man's body in this life is suited to his surroundings, so we may infer that his risen body will be suited to his surroundings hereafter; though, not knowing what they will be like, we cannot say what his body will be like. But we may be sure of this: the infinite resources of the God of Nature are not baffled by the grave. His power and wisdom know no limits; and He will be able, if He wishes it, to provide man with a body which, having no tendency to decay, will be a suitable instrument for the noblest exertions of his mind and will. However, we need not pursue this subject, since the Creeds say nothing about the condition of the resurrection body.

(c.) *The final state of the wicked.*

We now approach what is admitted by all to be a most difficult subject. The Athanasian Creed says that after the final judgment they that have done evil are to go into *everlasting fire*. Now the meaning of these words is much disputed among Christians, though obviously it must be the same as that in the Gospel from which they are quoted.<sup>1</sup> Some maintain that the Greek word for *everlasting* means literally lasting for ever, and others that it implies merely a very long duration. Similarly in regard to *fire*. The word, as said in Chap. xxiv., can hardly be pressed literally, but it certainly implies some form of intense suffering. And of course the subject is still further complicated if we consider all the other passages in the Bible bearing on the final state of the wicked.

But we need not do this at present, since we are only now considering the credibility of the Creed. The simplest method will be to glance at each of the three possible theories on the subject, and see if any one of them can be pronounced incredible. Each, it may be added, has supporters, who declare it to be the true meaning both of the Bible and of the Creed.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 25. 41.

Now, it is obvious that the wicked, unless they are to be in a continual state of change, which does seem almost incredible, must finally—

- (1) Exist for ever in misery = their endless misery ;
- (2) Exist for ever in happiness = their endless happiness ;
- (3) Or not exist for ever = their annihilation.

No other theory is possible, though of course any one of these final states may or may not be preceded by some temporary punishment.

(1.) *Their endless misery.*—This is plainly the theory most open to objection, and as it is also the most obvious meaning of the Creed, we must examine it at some length. It is often called the theory of endless or eternal *punishment*. But the latter word, which does not occur in the Creed, seems to imply that the misery is inflicted or caused by some one else ; whereas it may be self-produced, and come as a necessary consequence of certain acts. Of course, in popular language both may be called punishment ; but, as we shall see, there is an important difference between them. Now, there are four main arguments against the endless misery of the wicked. It is said to be inconsistent with the great attributes of God, especially His power, His justice, and His mercy, as well as with the endless happiness of the righteous ; and we will consider each in turn.

The first objection refers to God's *power*. The eternal existence of sinners against God means, it is said, a kind of eternal dualism, the never-ending antagonism between good and evil ; and this is most improbable. But, after all, the real mystery is that evil should ever have had a beginning, not that it should never have an end. If the free will of man or other beings is able to account for the former, may it not account for the latter also ? The final state of the wicked, we must remember, is but one of a series of difficulties connected with human freedom, and by no means the greatest. That God could create a free man at all, that He could foresee how he would use his freedom, that He should allow him to use it wrongly, thus involving himself and others in misery, and that this misery should last for ever, are all

to a great extent beyond our comprehension. But if we admit the first three, and they must be admitted, the last is certainly not incredible. Indeed, as evil exists at the present day, the burden of proof seems to lie on those who assert that it will one day disappear, and not on those who maintain that it will exist for ever.

The second and commonest objection refers to God's *justice*. The suffering, it is said, would be out of all proportion to the offence. Man's life is brief at the most, and every second of sin in this world cannot deserve countless years of misery in the next. In short, a man's sin here must anyhow be finite, while endless misery, however slight, would be infinite. But to begin with, man himself is obviously not a competent judge in the matter. All men are more or less sinners, and no criminal is a good judge of the punishment he deserves. Very possibly we do not realise the magnitude of sin, more especially its far-reaching effect on the character of others, who in their turn may influence others, and so on indefinitely. Perhaps, if we knew the almost infinite consequences of sin, and the infinite perfections of the Being against Whom it is committed, we should see that its guilt might really be infinite.

Moreover, it is a needless assumption that endless misery is for a man's sins here only. Why may not the wicked go on sinning eternally? They must certainly have the power of doing so, for the option of choosing right or wrong is essential to free will; and if we deny them their free will, they are no longer men but mere machines. And it even seems probable that they would do so; for all our experience of character is that it tends to a final permanence, either good or bad, which nothing can alter. If a man misspends his youth, he has not, and perhaps cannot have, another chance; his character is fixed for life. In the same way, if men repeatedly give way to sin here, their moral character may become fixed, and they may go on sinning for ever. Possibly, if they ceased to sin, their misery might cease also; only, having free will, they may choose to sin eternally. Sin would thus be like a cause and misery its effect, as it often is in

this world ; and as long as a cause continues, its effect must continue also. And if it be replied that, knowing the misery it caused them, wicked men would not go on sinning, the answer is obvious. Wicked men in this world often know the misery sin causes them, and yet they persist in sinning ; so why may they not do so hereafter ? And if there is endless sin, where is the injustice of endless misery ?

Still, it may be said that to create men at all with the possibility of such a future before them, and depending on the short probation in this world which fixes their character for ever, would be an act of injustice. But then the possibility of endless happiness is also before them, and also depending on the same short probation. And as men are given free will, with the option of choosing one or the other, there is nothing unjust in the results being so tremendous on either side. In earthly matters a game is not considered unfair merely because the stakes are high, provided there is an even chance of winning or losing. And with regard to the future state, the chances, if one may use such an expression, may be, and probably are, in favour of happiness ; only the most obstinate sinners being finally miserable. Anyhow, the fact of a long future, depending on a very short period, is in entire agreement with God's methods in nature, where, for instance, the shape of a tree for centuries is fixed during the short time it is growing.

Nor does the fact of God's foreknowledge as to how each man would act alter the case or cause any injustice. For, as said in Chap. iii., it does not interfere with man's freedom. God merely knows the use man will make of his freedom. And hence His knowing beforehand that a man will commit a murder does not make it unjust to punish him for doing so. And the same rule applies universally.

The third objection refers to God's *mercy*. Granting, it is said, that endless misery is not perhaps opposed to God's justice, yet it certainly is to His mercy. It must surely be against His nature to delight in suffering for its own sake, and therefore He would never punish men unless there were a chance of improving them. In answer to this it may be

pointed out that some future punishment for wicked men, who have been prosperous in this life, seems demanded by our sense of justice. Moreover, God's goodness is consistent with a great deal of misery here which is often undeserved; so why may it not be consistent with misery hereafter, which by hypothesis will be deserved? And inflicting punishment (*e.g.*, hanging a murderer) does not imply any delight in suffering. It may be a public duty, and it often serves as a useful warning to others. In the same way, for all we know, the endless misery of the wicked may be a warning to future worlds.

Moreover, as said before, and this is most important, the punishment or misery may not be *inflicted* at all, but may come as a *necessary consequence* of the sin itself. There is an important difference here. Suppose, for instance, a boy were to disobey his father by climbing a dangerous tree, and the father in consequence punished the boy every day for a year, this might well be called unmerciful. But now suppose there was no punishment at all, only the boy was miserable for a year because he fell from the tree and broke his leg. This would entirely alter the case, and all we could say is, that if the tree was so dangerous, the father ought to have warned the boy beforehand; but this by hypothesis he did, only the boy chose to disobey him.

So in the case before us. The future misery of the wicked may be the *consequence* rather than the punishment of sin. And the whole analogy of nature is strongly in favour of its being so. For example, if a man sows tares instead of wheat, he need not be punished for this, as if it were a crime, by being imprisoned; but he will assuredly have the misery of reaping tares and not wheat. It will be a necessary consequence of his own act. In the same way God, as the Author of Nature, has annexed certain miseries, such as diseases, to certain sins. But yet these miseries are never inflicted externally, but always come as the natural consequence of the sin. And therefore, if man is to suffer hereafter for other sins, we should expect this suffering to come in the same way, and to be a natural, and perhaps unavoidable, consequence of the sin itself.

Nor is it difficult to conceive how this may be. The endless misery of the wicked may be to a great extent remorse and regret at having rendered themselves unfit to share in the joys of heaven. And until we know what those joys are, we cannot know the intensity of this suffering. But it will certainly be aggravated by the knowledge that it was the result of their own deliberate choice of sin, after they had been repeatedly warned of its necessary consequences. And assuming that the joys of heaven are endless, and that the existence of the wicked outside heaven is also endless, this must plainly be an endless source of misery.

The fourth and last objection refers to *man* rather than God. It is that the endless misery of the wicked would destroy the happiness of the righteous; for how could a man enjoy heaven if he knew that his own father and mother were in endless and hopeless misery? Of course, if we deny him his memory, and say he does not remember them, it destroys his identity, and he is to all intents and purposes a different man. I have not met with any satisfactory answer to this difficulty. But it may be pointed out that misery is never more than partial. No one remembers all the friends he has met; and possibly persons in heaven may remember and recognise those they meet there, without being troubled by the thought of absent ones. And even if they should remember the others and know their fate, they will certainly know their character also, and that their fate was deserved. And this may alter their feelings in regard to them, as it often does now if we discover that one of our friends has behaved in a mean and disgraceful manner. While, lastly, the joys and activities of heaven may be so engrossing as not to leave any time for useless regrets.

Reviewing all these objections, it must be admitted that the endless misery of the wicked seems improbable, but it is certainly not *incredible*. To put it shortly, our knowledge of human nature convinces us that, out of a large number of wicked men, some at all events will continue to be wicked, *i.e.*, to commit sin as long as they live. Hence, if they live for ever, they will sin for ever. And if they sin for ever, it is

not only just, but perhaps inevitable, that they should be miserable for ever. And if so, the endless misery of the wicked does not reflect on either the power, justice, or mercy of God, and, as said above, is certainly not incredible.

(2.) *Their endless happiness.*—We pass on now to the next theory, that of their endless happiness. This is often called *Universalism*, and means that, after more or less punishment according to their crimes, the wicked will be finally reconciled to God, and in popular language go to heaven. This is turning hell into purgatory, a place of temporary punishment with a view to final purification. Now such a theory plainly involves one or other of these hypotheses. Either every offender must have eventual impunity to sin as much as he likes without being miserable, which seems incredible; or else the wicked will eventually cease to commit sin.

But wickedness in itself possesses no element of cure, or even of exhaustion. Its tendency is to intensify, accumulate, and perpetuate its own misery. A man who has completely given himself up to sin will, if left to himself, continue to sin more and more; and in the next world he will start under far worse circumstances than in this. Nor will his companions help him, for no one to improve a criminal would send him to associate with other criminals, many worse than himself. If then, the wicked are to be improved at all, it must be by God. But why should God make men exposed to sin here, if hereafter the inducements to well-doing will be overpowering? And why may not the wicked choose to sin eternally? If, on the other hand, they must finally forsake sin, whether they like it or not, it destroys their free will. This is the logical result of *Universalism*; it leads to *compulsory goodness*, and this is very like a contradiction in terms. For goodness cannot be ascribed to mere machines without free will, which only act under compulsion; and yet on this theory men would be nothing more.

(3.) *Their annihilation.*—Lastly, as to the other and only possible alternative, the annihilation or final destruction of the wicked. This may be more accurately described as their failure to obtain everlasting life. Immortality is here

regarded not as the attribute of all men, but as being *conditional* on a man's fulfilling certain duties and developing a certain character in this life. And the wicked, not having done this, will eventually cease to exist.

This theory presents less moral difficulties than either of the others, but it is not free from them. For are the wicked to be *punished* after death previous to their annihilation? If they are not, justice is not satisfied; and while disproportionate punishment seems a reflection on the perfect character of God, no punishment at all for prosperous sinners seems equally so. We could hardly admire an earthly ruler who allowed his own subjects to disobey and insult him with impunity. And yet, on the other hand, any punishment which precedes annihilation seems merely vindictive, and of no possible use. Anyhow, this theory cannot be said to be so probable as to render any other incredible. And of the two other possible theories, the *endless misery* of the wicked is certainly less difficult to believe than their *endless happiness*.

(E.) CONCLUSION.

We have now examined the four great doctrines of Christianity, the others either following directly from these, or not presenting any difficulty. And though, as we have shown, not one of these doctrines can be pronounced *incredible*, yet some of them, especially the Incarnation and the Atonement, seem so very *improbable* as to raise a strong presumption against the truth of the religion. This must be fully and freely admitted. At the same time, it is only fair to remember that this improbability is distinctly lessened by the following considerations.

Firstly, in regard to all these doctrines we have no *adequate* means of deciding what is or is not probable. Reason cannot judge where it has nothing to judge by; and apart from Christianity itself, we know next to nothing as to what were God's purposes in creating man. If, then, these doctrines are true, their truth depends not upon reason, but upon revelation. All reason can do is to examine most carefully the evidence in favour of the alleged revelation. Of this we should expect it to be able to judge, but the Christian doctrines themselves



are plainly above its jurisdiction. We are hence in a region where we cannot trust to our own sense of the fitness of things. The Jewish religion, it is true, gives us some help as to what were God's purposes in creation ; but then, as will be shown later on, it also hints at many of the Christian doctrines in its prophecies of a human and suffering Messiah who is also Divine.

Secondly, many *other* facts which are actually true appear equally improbable on *prima facie* grounds ; such, for instance, as the luminiferous æther and the phenomena of growth in the physical world, or the existence of evil and the freedom of man in the moral world. Apart from experience, what an overwhelming argument could be made out against such facts as these ; and yet they concern subjects which are to a great extent within our comprehension, whereas Christianity has to do with the nature, character, and intentions of a Being Who is avowedly beyond our comprehension. May not the difficulties in both cases, but especially in regard to the latter, be due to our *ignorance* only ? Very possibly, to understand all the difficulties of Christianity, we should have to understand all the counsels of the Infinite God, which is perhaps in the nature of things impossible for us finite men.

Thirdly, it should be noticed that this *partial* ignorance in regard to Christianity is precisely similar to our partial ignorance in regard to Natural Theology, discussed in Chap. iv. We there showed that, though we had not a perfect knowledge of the Deity, we had a sufficient knowledge for all practical purposes. And the same applies to Christianity. The subject does not claim to have been revealed in all its bearings, but only in so far as it concerns ourselves. Take, for instance, the doctrine of the Atonement. We are not told how much was God the Father's part, or how much was Christ's part, or the exact relation of these two ; but we are most fully told as to what must be *our* part in forsaking sin, &c., if we are to benefit by it ; and the same rule applies universally. Thus Christianity, like Natural Theology, claims to be a subject which can be only partly and yet sufficiently understood.

Fourthly, it should be noticed that, though individually the

Christian doctrines may seem very improbable, yet, when considered as a whole, as in all fairness they ought to be, there is a complete harmony between them. Their improbability is not *cumulative*. On the contrary, one helps to explain the difficulties of another in a remarkable way. This has been recognised by most writers, including many who can scarcely be called theologians. For instance, the great Napoleon is reported to have said, "If once the Divine character of Christ is admitted, Christian doctrine exhibits the precision and clearness of algebra; so that we are struck with admiration at its scientific connection and unity."<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion, it must be again pointed out that we are only now considering the *credibility* of Christianity, and not trying to make out that it is a probable religion on *a priori* grounds, which it obviously is not. Only its improbability is not so extremely great as to make it useless to consider the evidence in its favour. This is especially so when we reflect that this improbability must have seemed as great, if not greater, when Christianity was first preached than it does now, when we are so accustomed to the religion. And yet, as a matter of fact, the evidence in its favour did outweigh every objection, and finally convince the civilised world. What this evidence is we proceed to inquire.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Bertrand's Memoirs in the "Christian's Plea," by Redford, 2nd edit., p. 197. I have not verified the reference.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THAT THE FOUR GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM EXTERNAL TESTIMONY

#### (A.) THE UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

End of second century : Tertullian, Clement, Irenæus, and the Muratorian Canon. All this evidence retrospective, and of great value.

#### (B.) THE ALMOST UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

Justin Martyr, A.D. 150. He refers to publicly read Apostolic *Memoirs*, which must have been our Synoptic Gospels, as the same events are alluded to, though the quotations are not accurate; and probably included the Fourth Gospel.

#### (C.) THE DISPUTED TESTIMONY.

(1.) Heretical writers : Valentinus, Basilides, and Marcion. (2.) Papias : he mentions our first two Gospels by name, and probably knew of the others. (3.) The Sub-Apostolic Fathers : Polycarp, Ignatius, Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Hermas, and the Teaching of the Twelve. (4.) Conclusion : Gospels probably authentic.

WE showed in the last chapter that the Christian Religion is *credible*. We have next to consider what evidence there is for and against its being *true*. Now that it was founded primarily on the alleged teaching and miracles of Christ, and chiefly on His Resurrection, is admitted by every one. So we must first examine whether we have any trustworthy testimony as to these events; more especially whether the four Gospels, which appear to contain such testimony, are authentic. By the *four Gospels*, it need scarcely be remarked, we mean those commonly ascribed to SS. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and by their being *authentic* we mean that they were in the main, and excluding doubtful passages, written or

compiled by those persons. Whether the events they record are true is of course another question, which will be examined later on. At present we are dealing with their authenticity only; and as there are no manuscripts of a sufficiently early and undisputed date to appeal to, the evidence is necessarily indirect, and must be examined at some length. And we will first consider the *external testimony* from early Christian writers, reserving the *internal evidence* from the Gospels themselves for the next chapter.

(A.) THE UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

Fortunately we need not begin later than the end of the second century, since it is admitted by every one that our four Gospels were then well known throughout the Church. The three most important witnesses to this are Tertullian, Clement, and Irenæus; and it will be necessary to glance at their evidence, not only because they represent widely separated churches, but also because it is retrospective, and proves that the Gospels must have existed long before.

And first, as to *Tertullian of Carthage*. He lived at the end of the second and beginning of the third century. About thirty of his works have come down to us, and he makes use of the four Gospels so frequently that his quotations would fill a small volume. He was a Greek scholar, and generally translated from the Greek Gospels. But he shows that in his time there was also a well-established Latin version, since, though he criticises the translation in some cases, he elsewhere frequently quotes from it himself, so was evidently accustomed to use it.

Next, as to *Clement of Alexandria*. He was from A.D. 192-202 head of the Catechetical School in that city. He also quotes the four Gospels abundantly; and though he was acquainted with various apocryphal ones, evidently did not consider them of equal authority, since he remarks, referring to an alleged saying of Christ, "We have not this saying in the four Gospels which have been handed down to us; it is found in the Gospel according to the Egyptians."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clement, *Stromata*, Bk. iii. ch. xiii.

Lastly, as to *Irenæus of Lyons*. He lived a little earlier than the others, his works dating from about A.D. 185. And he not only quotes the Gospels frequently, but shows even more plainly than Clement that there were only *four* of acknowledged authority. While the fanciful reasons he gives for this, alleging that there were four Gospels because there were four rivers in Paradise and four quarters of the globe, &c., render it quite certain that the fact of there being actually four, neither more nor less, must have been undisputed and indisputable in his day. And he, like Clement and Tertullian, assigns them to the same Evangelists as we do now. And he also seems to have believed them to be verbally inspired, since he lays considerable stress on what we might think was the accidental use of the word *Christ* instead of *Jesus* in one verse, ascribing it directly to the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

And what renders his testimony all the more valuable is, that he had such excellent means of knowing the truth. He was born in Asia Minor about A.D. 130, and brought up under Polycarp; and he himself tells us in after life how well he remembered his teacher. "I can even describe the place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit and discourse—his going out, too, and his coming in—his general mode of life and personal appearance, together with the discourses which he delivered to the people; also how he would speak of his familiar intercourse with John, and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord; and how he would call their words to remembrance. Whatsoever things he had heard from them respecting the Lord, both with regard to His miracles and His teaching, Polycarp having thus received (information) from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life, would recount them all in harmony with the Scriptures."<sup>2</sup>

The importance of this can scarcely be exaggerated. Take, for instance, the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. Is it conceivable that Irenæus would have ascribed it to St. John

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus, Bk. iii. ch. xi. xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Irenæus, "Fragment of Epistle to Florinus." The translations here and elsewhere are from the Ante-Nicene Christian Librar

unless it had been mentioned to him as such by Polycarp! Or is it conceivable that Polycarp, who personally knew St. John, could have been deceived by a forgery? The difficulties of either alternative, when carefully considered, will be seen to be enormous; and yet there is no other, unless we admit that St. John was the author.

Before passing on, we must glance at the *Muratorian Canon*. This is the earliest known list of New Testament books, and, from internal evidence, appears to have been written somewhere about A.D. 175. The first part is lost; the portion that remains commences with "The third Book of the Gospel, that of Luke." It then mentions "The Fourth Gospel, that of John," and then enumerates the remaining books of our present New Testament, except the Epistle to the Hebrews, giving a few notes about each. It also mentions various apocryphal works, but distinguishes between these and the canonical ones, saying that the latter were inspired.

We can now sum up the evidence at the close of the second century. Our four Gospels were then in sole possession throughout the Christian world, and held exactly the same position among Christians as they do at present; while the fact of there being exactly four was looked upon as almost axiomatic. Moreover, they were universally ascribed to the authors we now ascribe them to; they had been in use long enough for a Latin version, and it may be added a Syriac one also, to have become well established; and they were always considered to be in some sense divinely inspired. And as this was not the case with spurious works attributed to the Apostles, or with the genuine works of subsequent writers, it plainly shows that the Church at that time had no doubt whatever as to their authenticity.

Nor is this evidence weakened by the fact that some of the writers were uncritical men, and held erroneous views on many subjects. Judgment is one thing, testimony another. Their judgment may often have been at fault, without weakening their testimony as to what was the belief of the Church in their day; nor does it alter the fact of their frequently quoting from our Gospels. And when we

remember the slowness of communication and absence of printing, it is clear that no late forgeries could have been thus universally recognised. And it need hardly be pointed out that this testimony, *all of which is undisputed*, is far stronger than that obtainable for the best classical works. And even if it stood alone, and no earlier testimony could be found, it would still raise a very strong presumption in favour of the authenticity of our Gospels. But it does not stand alone.

(B.) THE ALMOST UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

By far the most important of the earlier witnesses is *Justin Martyr*; and this importance is due to the fact that three of his writings, two Apologies and a Dialogue, have come down to us, which are admittedly genuine, and long enough to argue from with some confidence. And that he refers to our Gospels is *almost undisputed*. His works date from about A.D. 150, the first Apology being addressed to the Roman Emperor Antoninus (138-161). He was, moreover, a philosopher, and says himself that prior to embracing Christianity he had studied various philosophical systems and found them unsatisfactory; so we may be sure that he did not accept Christianity without making similar inquiries into the facts on which it rested.<sup>1</sup>

Now Justin does not allude to any of the Evangelists by name, but he frequently quotes from the "Memoirs" of our Lord, which he says were sometimes called *Gospels*, and were publicly read and expounded in the churches, together with the Old Testament Prophets. And he gives no hint that this was a local or recent practice, but implies that it was the universal and well-established custom. These Memoirs, he tells us,<sup>2</sup> were written *by the Apostles and their followers*, which exactly describes our present Gospels, two of which are ascribed to Apostles (Matthew and John), and the other two to their immediate followers (Mark and Luke). And considering that Justin was writing for unbelievers, not Christians, there is nothing strange in his not mentioning the names of the individual writers.

<sup>1</sup> Dial., ch. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Dial., ch. ciii.

Now it is probable on *prima facie* grounds that these publicly read Gospels of Justin's days, which were placed on a par with the Old Testament Scriptures, were the same as those universally received in the Church some twenty or thirty years later. History knows nothing of any movement for displacing one set of Gospels and introducing another. And it is hardly conceivable that such a change could have been effected, and the very existence of the older Gospels immediately forgotten, so that Irenæus, for instance, could have written as he did about there being only four. But this conclusion does not rest merely on antecedent probability, though this is almost conclusive; there is abundant evidence in its favour. And we will consider Justin's use of the first three, commonly called Synoptic Gospels, and of the Fourth Gospel separately.

As to the *Synoptic Gospels*, the substance of Justin's quotations from the Memoirs, of which there are over sixty, is precisely those events in the life of Christ recorded in our first three Gospels, and with scarcely any important addition. Indeed, out of all Justin's references to the events of Christ's life, whether quotations or not, of which there are over two hundred, only four refer to events not now found in our Gospels. This is very remarkable, and shows that even at this early time our Gospels, or others practically identical with them, were the only recognised sources of information.

For example, we may take the events of Christ's birth and childhood. As is well known, the apocryphal Gospels were very diffuse on this subject; but the events mentioned by Justin have been carefully collected, and are found to consist merely of these: that Christ was descended from Abraham through Jacob, Judah, Phares, Jesse, and David; that the Angel Gabriel announced His birth to the Virgin Mary; that this was a fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah; that Joseph was forbidden in a vision to put away his espoused wife; that Christ's birth at Bethlehem had been foretold by Micah; that His parents went thither from Nazareth, where they dwelt, in consequence of the enrolment of Quirinius; that as they could not find a lodging in the village they lodged in a cave close by, where Christ was born, and laid in a manger; that



while there wise men from Arabia, guided by a star, worshipped Him and offered Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and by revelation were commanded not to return to Herod, to whom they had first come ; that He was called Jesus, as the Saviour of His people ; that by the command of God His parents fled with Him to Egypt for fear of Herod, and remained there till Archelaus succeeded him ; and that Herod, being deceived by the wise men, slew the infants of Bethlehem, so that the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled, who spoke of Rachel weeping for her children.

With the exception of the birth in a *cave*, and the wise men coming from *Arabia*, instead of merely the East, there is no addition to our present Gospels ; and both these events may well have been handed down traditionally in Palestine, of which country Justin was a native. It seems, then, to be obvious that Justin was quoting from our three Gospels, and any ordinary reader would at once draw this conclusion. There is, however, this difficulty. Scarcely any of the quotations are verbatim accurate, and it has been urged in consequence that Justin must have been quoting from some *Lost Gospel*.

But this theory is hardly tenable. For, to begin with, Justin himself sometimes quotes the same passage differently, clearly showing that he was relying on his memory. And this explains why, as a rule, the shorter quotations are less accurate than the longer ones, since he would be less likely to look up the reference, which in those days of closely written manuscripts, with no concordances, must have been a tedious process. Also, when quoting the Old Testament, he is almost equally inaccurate ; and yet none would deny that he both knew the Old Testament, intended to quote it, and considered it of great authority. Moreover, later Christian writers, such as Irenæus, who avowedly quoted from our Gospels, are also inaccurate in small details. There is thus no sufficient reason for assuming the existence of a *Lost Gospel* to account for Justin's quotations ; though, if we do, it does not affect the historical argument in favour of Christianity, since of necessity this *Lost Gospel* must have contained a precisely similar account

of Christ's life to that in our Synoptic ones. But there is practically no doubt that Justin was quoting from these Gospels.

But with regard to the *Fourth Gospel*, the case is slightly different, since there are far fewer apparent references in Justin. This is not perhaps surprising, as that Gospel is more doctrinal and less historical than the other three, and therefore less suitable for quoting in controversy with unbelievers. But Justin must have known it, since its phraseology, and to some extent its doctrines, are distinct from the other three, and yet they are reproduced by Justin.

To begin with, there are a few *quotations* which cannot reasonably be assigned to any other source. The following are two of the strongest: "Christ also said, Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mother's womb is manifest to all."<sup>1</sup> "He (John the Baptist) cried to them, I am not the Christ, but the voice of one crying; for He that is stronger than I shall come, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear."<sup>2</sup> There are slight verbal differences here, but only such as are met with in the rest of Justin's quotations.

Again, the doctrines taught by Justin regarding the pre-existence and divinity of Christ, the sacrament of baptism, and some others, are precisely such as are found in the *Fourth Gospel* and nowhere else. A couple of quotations must suffice here: "The first power after God the Father and Lord of all is the Word, who is also the Son; and of Him we will, in what follows, relate how He took flesh and became man."<sup>3</sup> "The Word of wisdom, who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things."<sup>4</sup> It has been suggested that Justin derived these doctrines from the Greek Jew Philo, born about B.C. 10, in whose writings the Divine Word or *Logos* is often alluded to. But the great doctrine of the *Fourth Gospel*, that of the Incarnation of the Word, which is reproduced by Justin, is never hinted at by Philo. Moreover, considering

<sup>1</sup> Apol. I. ch. lxi.; John 3. 3-5.

<sup>2</sup> Dial. ch. lxxxviii.; John 1. 20-27.

<sup>3</sup> Apol. I. ch. xxxii.

<sup>4</sup> Dial. ch. lxi.

that in his Dialogue Justin was arguing with a Jew, it is most unlikely that he should not have referred to Philo by name, if quoting from him.

To the above evidence must be added that of Justin's disciple, *Tatian*. He wrote a book called the *Diatessaron*, which, as its name implies, was a kind of harmony of the *Four Gospels*. It was based chiefly on St. Matthew's, the events peculiar to the others being introduced in various places. And it may be noticed in passing that men do not write commentaries on books, or try to harmonise them, unless they are fairly ancient works and of established importance. Its special value in our present inquiry is that it commences with the sentence, *In the beginning was the Word*, &c., which is the opening clause of the Fourth Gospel, and which, therefore, the writer must have known, and have considered as of equal authority with the others. This shows that the Fourth Gospel must have been in circulation in Justin's time, and renders it almost certain that he derived these quotations and doctrines from that Gospel, and not from some purely imaginary source.

We can now sum up the evidence of Justin. He shows that in the middle of the second century, and his memory was probably good for thirty years earlier, certain Apostolic *Memoirs* or *Gospels* were publicly read in the churches, and were evidently considered of great authority. And from an immense mass of evidence, both internal and external, combined with a very strong *a priori* probability, it is almost certain that these were the four Gospels, known and quoted throughout the Church towards the close of that century.

(C.) THE DISPUTED TESTIMONY.

We pass on now to consider the testimony borne to our Gospels by still earlier writers, all of which is more or less disputed by some critics.

(1.) *Heretical writers*.—To begin with, there is evidence that some of the heretics of the second century (*e.g.*, Valentinus and Basilides), in their controversy with the orthodox, appealed to the four Gospels, especially to that of St. John, as of undisputed authority. This evidence is afforded by Hippolytus, who,

though he did not write till about A.D. 210, gives copious extracts from the works of these writers. And even assuming, as some critics do, that he is wrong in ascribing these works to the actual founders of the heresies, and that they were written by some of their followers, the inference is none the less plain that the Gospels they appealed to must have been looked upon as authoritative before their separation from the orthodox, about A.D. 130.

A more important witness is Marcion. He wrote about A.D. 140 a kind of Gospel, which was based on that of St. Luke. This is now admitted by nearly all critics, including the author of "Supernatural Religion" in the third edition of his book, though he had before tried to prove the opposite. And hence, as Marcion was a heretic, St. Luke's Gospel must not only have been in existence but of acknowledged authority at that time.

(2.) *Papias*.—He was bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor early in the second century, probably about A.D. 116, and only a few fragments of his writings have been preserved by Irenæus and Eusebius, the great Church historian, A.D. 315. We learn from the former that he was a disciple of St. John and a companion of Polycarp; and considering that Irenæus was himself Polycarp's pupil, there is no reason to doubt this.<sup>1</sup> But these fragments have been the cause of great controversy. Papias tells us himself what were his sources of information: "If, then, any one who had attended on the elders came, I asked minutely after their sayings,—what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord's disciples: which things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I imagined that what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice."

He had thus the best possible means of knowing, and his testimony to the first two Gospels is explicit. He says, "Matthew put together the oracles in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could." And "Mark,

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus, Bk. v. ch. xxxiii.

having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter."<sup>1</sup>

But Eusebius gives no quotations from Papias concerning the last two Gospels, and this *silence of Eusebius* is often alleged as showing that Papias, and similarly other early writers, could not have known the books in question. But the objection is based on a misunderstanding of Eusebius. His words are, "But as my history proceeds I will take care, along with the succession (of the bishops), to indicate what Church writers (who flourished) from time to time have made use of any of the disputed books, and what has been said by them concerning the canonical and acknowledged Scriptures, and anything that (they have said) concerning those which do not belong to this class."<sup>2</sup> Here he undertakes to mention not every reference to the New Testament Scriptures in the early Fathers, but only any allusions to the *disputed* writings of his time, and anything they related about the canonical books. Hence there was no occasion for him to mention mere quotations from our four Gospels, since at the time of Eusebius they were undisputed.

Fortunately this inference is placed beyond a doubt by considering what Eusebius says about those writers whose works are still extant. A couple of examples will be quite sufficient. Eusebius tells us that *Clement of Rome* quoted the Epistle to the Hebrews, but says nothing about his quoting 1 Corinthians, though the latter quotation is distinct and the former only inferential. The reason is plain. At the time of Eusebius some doubt still existed as to the Hebrews, but none as to the other Epistle. Again, he quotes what *Irenæus* says about the four Gospels and the Revelation, and in general terms that he quoted 1 John and 1 Peter, and the Shepherd of Hermas, which latter he accepted as canonical; but not a word is said about Irenæus having

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, Hist., iii. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Lightfoot's translation, *Contemp.*, Jan. 1875; Eusebius, Hist., iii. 3.

used the Acts and St. Paul's Epistles. Yet, as a matter of fact, he does so frequently. Plainly Eusebius did not mention this because he took it for granted that every Christian acknowledged these writings. But if the works of Irenæus had perished like those of Papias, how fallacious would have been the argument from the *silence of Eusebius*. This objection, then, cannot be maintained.

There is, however, one point on which this silence may be appealed to. Eusebius does not mention the use of any *apocryphal* Gospel by Papias, which, according to his own method, he would have done had Papias used it. And this seems to show that Papias either never heard of such books, or did not consider them worth alluding to, which is in either case valuable evidence in favour of the canonical ones.

Whether, as a matter of fact, Papias knew the third and fourth Gospels cannot be decided from the fragments of his works which have come down to us, though there are slight indications that he did. For instance, the order in which he enumerates the Apostles—Andrew, Peter, and Philip—is not that of their importance, nor are they ever mentioned in that order in the Synoptics, but it is the order in which their calling is described in St. John.

(3.) *The Sub-Apostolic Fathers*.—The last group of writers to be examined are those who lived in the age immediately succeeding the Apostles, and hence called the Sub-Apostolic Fathers. The chief of these are *Polycarp* of Smyrna, the disciple of St. John; *Ignatius* of Antioch; *Clement* of Rome, the companion of St. Paul,<sup>1</sup> and the writers of the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, and *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. Their dates cannot be determined for certain, but they probably wrote between A.D. 90 and 110, or perhaps a little later.

Now none of these writers mention the Gospels *by name*; but this is no argument to show that they were not quoting them, because the same writers, when admittedly quoting St. Paul's Epistles, also do so at times without reference or acknow-

<sup>1</sup> Phil. 4. 3.

ledgment. And later Christian writers do precisely the same. The Gospels are often not quoted by name, but their language and phraseology are continually employed, in much the same way as it is by clergymen when preaching at the present day. If, then, we find in these writers passages similar to those in our Gospels, the inference is that they were quoting from them; and, as a matter of fact, we do find such passages, though they are not numerous. A single example may be given from each; and though the quotation is often *indirect*, yet, if it is admitted to be a quotation, it is the more valuable on this account, since the writers must have been very familiar with our Gospels before they would have thus adopted their language.

“But being mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching: Judge not, that ye be not judged; forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you; be merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again; and once more, Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.”<sup>1</sup>

“Yet the Spirit, as being from God, is not deceived. For it knows both whence it comes and whither it goes.”<sup>2</sup>

“Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, how He said, Woe to that man! It were better for him that he had never been born, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my elect. Yea, it were better for him that a millstone should be hung about (his neck), and he should be sunk in the depths of the sea, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my little ones.”<sup>3</sup>

“He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”<sup>4</sup>

“The husband should put her away, and remain by himself. But if he put his wife away, and marry another, he also commits adultery.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Polycarp, ch. ii.; comp. Matt. 7. 1, 2; 5. 3, 7, 10; Luke 6. 36-38.

<sup>2</sup> Ignatius to Philadelphians, ch. vii.; comp. John 3. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Clement, ch. xlvi.; comp. Matt. 18. 6; Luke 17. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Barnabas, ch. v.; comp. Luke 5. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Hermas, Bk. ii., Command. iv.; comp. Matt. 19. 9.

“Having said beforehand all these things, baptize ye in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost in living water.”<sup>1</sup>

Two other passages deserve special mention. We read in Barnabas, “Let us beware lest we be found, as it is written, Many are called, but few are chosen.”<sup>2</sup> Here we have words which are only found in our Gospels, introduced with the well-known phrase *as it is written*, which is only used of Scripture quotations. This shows conclusively that at the time of the writer some Gospel containing these words must have been well known, and considered of high authority. And the attempts to explain away this quotation as from the second Book of Esdras,<sup>3</sup> where the words are, “Many are created, but few shall be saved;” or as an error on the part of the writer, who fancied they came somewhere in the Old Testament, are quite inadmissible. Again, Polycarp<sup>4</sup> trusts that his readers are well versed in the *sacred Scriptures*, and adds that in these Scriptures it is written, “Be ye angry and sin not; and, Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” As the latter passage is only found in Eph. 4. 26, it shows that in his time a collection of Christian writings existed which were called the “sacred Scriptures,” and which probably included our Gospels.

But it may be said, may not all these quotations be from some *Lost Gospel*? Of course they may. It is always possible to refer quotations not to the only book in which we know they do occur, but to some imaginary book in which they might occur. There is, however, no need to do so in this case, as all the evidence points the other way. And if it be further urged, why did not these writers refer more frequently to the Gospels, if they really knew them? the answer is obvious. The writings in question are very short; altogether they would not amount to as much as our four Gospels; and their subject-matter did not require them to quote the Gospels, so that the references we do find are all

<sup>1</sup> Teaching, ch. vii. ; comp. Matt. 28. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Barnabas, ch. iv. ; comp. Matt. 22. 14.

<sup>3</sup> 8. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ch. xii.



incidental. Moreover, we must remember a single quotation proves the previous existence of the document quoted, whereas ten pages without a quotation do not disprove it.

Lastly, it must be noticed that when these writers refer to the sayings of Christ or the events of His life, they always do so without the slightest hesitation, as if it were acknowledged truth. And, as we have seen, their allusions are often introduced with the words *remember* or *be mindful*, clearly showing that they expected their readers to know them already. Hence some books must have then existed which were well known, containing a life of Christ; and the improbability of these having perished, and a fresh set of Gospels having been published in a few years, is very great.

In addition to the foregoing evidence we have the statement in 1 Tim. 5. 18, "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his hire." The latter expression occurs nowhere in the Old Testament, but is found verbatim in the Third Gospel.<sup>1</sup> There is also the passage in Acts 20. 35; but this is not found in our Gospels, and was probably derived from some earlier one, or possibly from oral teaching.

(4.) *Conclusion.*—We may now sum up the *external testimony* as to the four Gospels. It is plain that at the *beginning* of the second century they were well known throughout the Church, and this alone would necessitate their composition in the first century; while the few earlier allusions, combined with the uniform tradition of the Church and the entire absence of any counter-testimony, make it probable that they were actually the works of the four Evangelists to whom they have been thus universally ascribed. This, it may be added, was also the conclusion of Eusebius, who carefully studied the subject, and had access to many works, such as those of Papias, which have now perished.

And it must be remembered that, with the exception of St. John, none of these men seem to have taken a prominent part in the founding of Christianity; so there was no reason

<sup>1</sup> Luke 10. 7.

to ascribe the Gospels to them rather than to such great men as Peter, James, and Paul, unless they actually wrote them. Nor does the phrase, the Gospel *according to Matthew*, &c., imply that it was written by some one else, and only recorded what he taught. For the same phrase is used as to St. John's Gospel, which itself claims indirectly to have been written by that Apostle; while the Gospels of Mark and Luke were universally believed to record the teachings of Peter and Paul respectively. What it really means is, that the Church considered the Gospels to be in reality but *one*, though recorded by different persons. We have thus very strong external testimony in favour of the authenticity of the four Gospels.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THAT THE FOUR GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM INTERNAL EVIDENCE

#### (J.) THE THREE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

- (a.) Their accuracy. This is shown (1) by secular history ; (2) by comparing them with one another ; and (3) by their general style.
- (b.) Their common narratives. The so-called Triple Tradition.
- (c.) Their probable date. Extremely early date of original Gospels, say A.D. 35-45 ; which were soon superseded by our present ones, say A.D. 50-70.

#### (B.) THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

Its importance as being by the same writer as the Third Gospel.

- (a.) Its accuracy. Three examples : (1) the titles of various rulers ; (2) the riot at Ephesus ; and (3) the undesigned coincidences with St. Paul's Epistles.
- (b.) Its unity. The " We " sections.
- (c.) Its authorship and date. The writer was a companion of St. Paul and a medical man ; he was named Luke, and wrote about A.D. 63.

#### (C.) THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

- (a.) Its authenticity. The writer was a Jew of Palestine, living in the first century, and an eyewitness of what he describes ; hence probably St. John.
- (b.) Its connection with the Synoptics. It was meant to be supplemental to them ; while the alleged difference in Christ's character, and the so-called discrepancies, favour its authenticity.
- (c.) Its connection with the Book of Revelation. The latter is generally admitted to be by St. John, and there are no valid reasons for the Gospel being by a different author. Conclusion.

#### (A.) THE THREE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

Having decided in the last chapter that the four Gospels are probably authentic from *external testimony*, we pass on now to the *internal evidence*, which, it will be seen, strongly supports

this conclusion. For convenience we will examine the Synoptic Gospels separately from the Fourth, which is of a different character; and we will consider first their accuracy, then their common narratives, and lastly their probable date.

(a.) *Their accuracy.*

This is shown partly by comparing their statements where possible with external authorities; partly by comparing them with one another; and partly by the general style of the writings and the facts they record. We will consider these three points in turn.

(1.) *External corroboration.*—And first as to external corroboration. It is, of course, admitted that the writers show a thorough acquaintance with Palestine both as to its geography, history, and people, especially the political and social state of the country in the half century preceding the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). The Jewish historian Josephus, who wrote about A.D. 95, gives us a vivid description of this; and everything we read in the Gospels is in entire agreement with it.

And this is the more remarkable because the country was then in a very anomalous condition. It was not like an ordinary Roman province, but had been allowed to retain a certain amount of independence. And yet this *double* system of government, half-Roman, half-Jewish, which only existed up to the fall of Jerusalem, is implied all through the Gospels. It extends even to their very language, where we find Latin and Hebrew terms intermixed, and often close together; e.g., the Roman farthing and the Hebrew, Raca and Gehenna.<sup>1</sup>

Now this shows they must certainly have been written by Jews, or at least by men familiar with Palestine and well acquainted with the time in question. And when we consider the rapid spread of Christianity, and how soon the Gentile element predominated over the Jewish, it is most unlikely that Gospels written by the latter section should have been universally received except in very early days. It may also be added that the apocryphal Gospels are different from the canonical ones in this respect. They are, as a rule, very

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 5. 22, 26.

clumsy forgeries, the writers being quite unable to throw themselves back into the times about which they wrote.

With regard to the actual events described in the Gospels, we have, as a rule, no other account, but where we have, their accuracy is strikingly confirmed. And this includes many points which none but contemporaries were likely to have known. Among such may be mentioned the importance assigned by the Pharisees to their *traditions*; the mention of the *didrachma*, or tribute-money voluntarily paid for the support of the Temple; the names and titles of the various *rulers* of Palestine in the fifteenth year of Tiberius; the strange fact that the term high priest was applied to *two persons* at the same time, which was incorrect according to Jewish law; the publicans or tax-gatherers for the Romans being often *Jews*; the *ill-feeling* of the Samaritans towards the Jews; and the position *Pilate* occupied as Roman governor to the Jewish courts.<sup>1</sup>

In all these cases the accuracy of the narrative is directly confirmed by Josephus or other sources, though it is obvious that many of them are not likely to have been known to a late writer. The *didrachma*, for instance, would have been unintelligible soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, which completely changed everything in Palestine; yet it is used without explanation by St. Matthew, though it is explained by Josephus.<sup>2</sup>

In many other cases secular history *indirectly* confirms the narrative by explaining many points which seem hard to understand. As an example we may take the conduct of Pilate. The actual fact that he was Procurator of Judæa and condemned Christ to death is of course undisputed, being confirmed by Tacitus.<sup>3</sup> But his conduct, judging by our Gospels alone, is hard to understand. He evidently had the greatest contempt for the Jews, and evidently thought Christ innocent, and wished to release Him. And yet, at the mere suggestion that he was not Cæsar's friend, he sacrificed this

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 15. 3; 17. 24; Luke 3. 1, 2; 5. 27; 9. 53; 23. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus, *Antiq.*, xiii. 10; xvii. 8; xviii. 9; xx. 6; *Wars*, ii. 12, 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Annals*, Bk. xv. ch. 44.

innocent Man to gratify the people whom he despised. Secular history explains everything. The then Cæsar (Tiberius) was a most arbitrary and suspicious man. Pilate, who was a weak ruler, had already been in trouble once; and had he been reported again, especially for anything like disloyalty, such as releasing a so-called *King of the Jews*, it would certainly have cost him his government, and probably his life. The most unlikely conduct is thus shown to be quite natural when we know the man and the circumstances of his time; but a late writer would hardly have known either.

Of course, combined with all this accuracy there are a few instances of alleged *inaccuracy*. Two are commonly urged. The first is a mere slip, probably due to a copyist, in calling Zacharias, not the son of Jehoiada, as he ought to have been, but the son of Barachias, which was the better known man of that name.<sup>1</sup> The other is the enrolment under Quirinius. According to Luke 2. 2, this occurred in B.C. 4; whereas we learn that Quirinius was Governor of Syria, and carried out a taxing in A.D. 6. It is not improbable, however, that Quirinius was twice governor, and that a census or enrolment may have been first taken, the taxing itself not occurring till ten years later. St. Luke, it may be added, expressly says that this was the *first* enrolment, implying that he knew of a second. And since it was carried out in the Jewish manner, that is, genealogically by families, it is very probable that it occurred in the reign of the Jewish king, Herod the Great, who died B.C. 4.

It is also urged that the massacre of infants at Bethlehem, if it really took place, would have been alluded to by Josephus. But the number slain must have been very small, since the massacre did not extend to Jerusalem, only five miles distant; and as infanticide was extremely common among the Romans, there is nothing remarkable in the murder of a few infants not being mentioned. A far more important point, as to Christ's miracles not being alluded to in secular history, is discussed in Chap. xix.

(2.) *Internal corroboration*.—We pass on now to the support

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 23. 35; 2 Chron. 24. 20; Zech. 1. 1.

which the Synoptic Gospels afford each other. They frequently record the same incidents, and yet with such different details as to make it extremely probable that they derived their information from a separate source. And they thus confirm one another as to nearly all the important events of Christ's life.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that there are slight *discrepancies* between them ; and these are often appealed to as discrediting the narratives, but without sufficient reason. They are precisely such trivial mistakes as independent historians writing at the time might naturally make, and are not such as to interfere with the substantial accuracy of the narratives. Of course, it is only *unintentional* errors which are admitted. Any idea that the writers intentionally misstated anything, however trivial, is out of the question. There is no evidence whatever to support such a charge. Their mistakes, as before said, are such as any good historian might make, and are quite unimportant.

For example, St. Matthew relates that at the time of Christ's Baptism the Voice from heaven said, "*This* is my beloved Son, in *whom* I am well pleased ;" and the other Evangelists, "*Thou* art my beloved Son, in *thee* I am well pleased."<sup>1</sup> Now the Voice may have spoken in the third or in the second person, but not in both. There is a clear verbal discrepancy, whatever words were used or in whatever language they were spoken. Of course it can be explained if both forms were used one after the other, but this is a scarcely tenable hypothesis. Again, St. Matthew records the passage about the queen of the south as being spoken just after, and St. Luke as just before, the similar passage about the men of Nineveh, though both can hardly be correct.<sup>2</sup> While, however, the discrepancies are plain, their unimportance is at least equally so. On the whole, then, these narratives, wherever we have any means of testing them, either by secular history or by one another, appear to be substantially accurate.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 3. 17 ; Mark 1. 11 ; Luke 3. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 12. 42 ; Luke 11. 31.

(3.) *Their general style.*—Lastly, it must be noticed that even where we have no means of testing the Gospels, they have every appearance of being *thoroughly truthful*. The writers record their own faults, such as their repeated want of faith and their cowardice in running away when Christ was apprehended, in the most candid manner. And they record all along many minute incidents which could hardly have been worth inventing. Moreover, when they relate Christ's acts, they do so as a rule without remark, and do not dilate upon their excellence in the way St. Paul does, or stop to censure His foes. And the same calmness is shown even when recording the details of His Passion and the triumph of His Resurrection. They express no indignation at the one, and no exultation at the other, but strictly limit themselves to the simple facts. Nor is there the slightest trace of their wishing to write an ideal Life of Christ, or to represent not what He actually said and did, but what they thought He would have said and done had the supposed circumstances arisen. In short, these narratives appear to be a simple and straightforward account of matters of fact, and were evidently meant by their writers to be considered as such. Indeed, one of them tells us in his preface that he had ample means of knowing the truth, and that this was the very reason why he determined to write.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, and this is very important, the facts recorded in the Gospels are often of such a kind as to bear unmistakable signs of truthfulness. For example, the Evangelists record several of Christ's *hard sayings*, as they are called, which must have presented great difficulties. In particular may be mentioned those about the bystanders not dying till apparently the end of the world, a Christian's faith being able to move mountains, and all believers being able to work miracles.<sup>2</sup> That such statements should have been invented by forgers is out of the question. So far from helping Christianity, they could only have proved a hindrance to it; and there is thus only one explanation which can

<sup>1</sup> Luke 1. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 16. 28; 17. 20; Mark 11. 23; 16. 17.



account for their occurrence in the Gospels. It is that they were actually spoken by Christ; that the writers knew this; and that therefore, considering their importance, they did not venture to omit them or soften them down, no matter what difficulties they presented.

And much the same applies to the description of the *fall of Jerusalem* and the Last Judgment, which seem confused together in Matt. 24. and Luke 21. Had the Gospels been written after the former event, it is almost certain that the writers would have distinguished between the two, and would most likely have alluded to the fulfilment of the prophecy about the former, as one of them does elsewhere with regard to a predicted famine.<sup>1</sup>

Again, nearly all the *parables* of Christ have very strong marks of genuineness. They are thoroughly natural, and suit the surrounding scenery in Palestine, and many of them are recorded in almost identical words in the three Gospels. Moreover, they are unique in Christian literature. However strange we may think it, the early Christians seem never to have adopted Christ's method of teaching by parables. And yet, if they had invented these parables, instead of merely recording them, they could, and doubtless would, have invented others like them. It is hence probable that these discourses are genuine; and if so, they must have been written down within a very few years, since the accurate preservation of such long discourses by memory would have been most difficult.

It may also be noticed that several *subjects* are discussed, such as the lawfulness of the Jews paying tribute to Cæsar, which would have had no interest after the fall of Jerusalem. That conversations on such subjects should have been invented in later days, or even thought worth recording, is most improbable.

In many other cases *individual remarks* show the genuineness of the incident. As an example of this class we may take the raising of Jairus' daughter. Now of course, any late writer, wishing to magnify the power of Christ, might have

<sup>1</sup> Acts 11. 28.

invented this or any other miracle. But if so, it is scarcely conceivable that he should have put into the mouth of Christ the words, *The child is not dead, but sleepeth*.<sup>1</sup> These words seem to imply that Christ Himself did not consider it a miracle; and whatever difficulties they may present, they certainly bear the marks of genuineness; and this is but one instance out of many. This concludes a brief examination of the accuracy of these Gospels, and, as we have shown, they bear strong marks of accuracy throughout.

(b.) *Their common narratives.*

We now come to a much more difficult subject, for the three Gospels are found on examination to have a common element. This includes not only the words of Christ, in which case the obvious explanation would be that each was strictly true, though perhaps written independently, but also His deeds, and what is more remarkable, the manner of narrating these. And as the number of identical passages is far too numerous to be ascribed to chance or to mere oral tradition, it must be due to *copying* in some form, either two Evangelists copying the third, or all three some earlier document; the latter being the more probable, since we know from the commencement of the Third Gospel that such document existed.

The portion which the three Gospels have in common is often called the *Triple Tradition*; but this is a singularly unfortunate name, as it seems to imply that this portion of the narrative is triply attested, whereas it is precisely the opposite. If the three Evangelists record an event in the same words, it is obviously derived from only one original witness; whereas, if they record it in different words, it may very possibly be due to three independent witnesses. This triple tradition, it may be mentioned, refers chiefly to the events in Galilee. It includes many of the parables of Christ, also several miracles, such as the stilling of the storm, the feeding of the five thousand, the curing of the Gadarene, and the Transfiguration; but it stops short at the Passion. If, as is probable, it represents the testimony of a single witness, there is little difficulty in

<sup>1</sup> Mark 5. 39.

identifying him with St. Peter. As to the closing scenes of Christ's life, there would, of course, be numerous witnesses ; and this accounts for want of verbal agreement here.

But there still remains the difficult problem as to whether the original document was in Greek or Hebrew. The former seems necessary to account for many identical Greek words and expressions, while the latter seems equally necessary to account for numerous slight divergences, which are easily explained as different translations from a common original. Moreover, were we able to settle this question, it would still leave much to be decided. Matthew and Mark, for instance, contain a common element which is not in Luke. Was this part of the original document, which Luke for some reason or other did not incorporate into his narrative, or have we here the remains of another earlier Gospel ? And the same applies to the portions which Mark and Luke have in common, but which Matthew omits. It seems almost certain that some of these must have belonged to the so-called Triple Tradition ; for it is most unlikely that each of the Evangelists should have verbally incorporated the whole of this original document in his narrative, though scattered about in different parts, and sometimes in a different order.

It will hence be seen that the number of possible explanations is very great, and they have nearly all had strong supporters. But the truth is, that with our present knowledge, the dissection of the Gospels into their original parts is an insoluble problem. Fortunately, it is not necessary for our present inquiry, though we may safely assume that our present Gospels were not the *earliest* accounts of Christ's life. And admitting this, we must inquire when were these earliest Gospels probably written, and when were they probably superseded by our present ones ?

(c.) *Their probable date.*

Now everything points to these *original* accounts of Christ's life having been written at an extremely early date. This was indeed almost inevitable, for the Christian religion spread with great rapidity, and from the very first the substance of every missionary's preaching was not a mere philosophy or

system of ethics, but the life and work of Christ.<sup>1</sup> And it may be noticed in passing that Christianity differs from all other religions, past or present, in thus resting entirely on the Person of its Founder. Of course other religions have had founders, but they might remain as religions without any reference to their founders. With Christianity, however, the case is different. Its chief doctrines are the real or alleged events in the life of Christ, such as His Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection. And this shows that Christian missionaries, from the very first, must have had some means of answering questions concerning Christ's life. And that they left such accounts with the Churches they founded is equally probable.

Nor is all this mere conjecture. As is well known, four of *St. Paul's Epistles* (Rom. 1. and 2., Cor., and Gal.) are admitted to be genuine by critics of all schools, such as Baur, Strauss, and Rénan; and these show that he used to base his teaching on certain historic facts connected with Christ's life, and was in the habit of committing these to his converts. Moreover, when writing to them subsequently, he always assumed them to have a tolerably full account of Christ's life, for he called upon them to imitate it, and specially held up to their admiration Christ's self-sacrifice, meekness, and gentleness.<sup>2</sup> And that these accounts were documentary rather than oral is extremely probable, since Christianity arose in a literary age; and these same Epistles show how fully both preachers and converts were able to appreciate documentary teaching.

This inference is rendered still stronger when we remember that many of the parables and other sayings of Christ have, as before shown, strong claims to genuineness, and therefore to a very early date. And this earliest account of Christ's words must also have included an account of His *deeds*, because these would be not only the easier to record of the two, but would be more likely to be inquired about by converts, and in that age would certainly have been considered

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Acts 10. 35-43.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 11. 23-25; 15. 1-8; Rom. 15. 2, 3; 2 Cor. 8. 9; 10. 1.

the more important ; while from the specimens of teaching we have in the Acts and elsewhere, Christ's works appear to have been much more alluded to than His words. Moreover, many of His sayings would be almost unintelligible apart from the circumstances under which they were spoken. And when we add to this the fact that the Synoptics contain a common element of deeds as well as of words, the inference seems irresistible that some accounts of Christ's life must have been written down very soon after His death.

But now comes the important question : When were these earliest Gospels superseded by our present ones ? In the absence of direct evidence we can only judge by probability, which is strongly in favour of our present Gospels having been written very soon after the others.

To begin with, the earliest Gospels have entirely perished, except those portions which have been incorporated into our present three. This is undisputed, since all critics admit that our present apocryphal Gospels are later than the canonical ones. The first Gospels, then, could only have survived a very short time, or they would not have been superseded so rapidly or so completely. But why were they superseded at all ? There is no record of any Council or other Church authority interfering in the matter. Our present four seem to have crushed out all competitors by their own inherent weight. They were evidently thought to be as authentic and more complete than the others. Suppose now, the earlier ones to have been mere fragmentary accounts of the life of Christ, and that some years later two of the Apostles, and two other persons well qualified to do so, wrote our present complete Gospels embodying these fragments, all is clear. The earlier ones would at once disappear. But, on the other hand, suppose that the earlier ones were written by the contemporaries of Christ, and that our present ones were written years afterwards, by men who had not such authentic knowledge, why they should have superseded the earlier ones is difficult to account for. Indeed, there is a very strong improbability of any apostolic Gospels being superseded, or even altered, in subsequent times.

It may also be added that there is nothing in our present

Gospels which requires or suggests a late date. The actual events they record ended a few weeks after the death of Christ. And though there is a single expression, *unto this day*,<sup>1</sup> which shows that that Gospel could not have been written till some years later, even this does not require more than, say, twenty years' interval, and would be quite meaningless after the destruction of Jerusalem. Moreover, the later the date we assign to our Gospels, the less likely is it for them to have been accepted by the Churches of Europe, Asia, and Africa, without any of them having, as far as we know, the slightest doubt as to their authenticity. And this is confirmed by the fact that none of the apocryphal Gospels, which were later inventions, could ever obtain universal acceptance.

On the whole, then, everything points to the earliest Gospels having been written very soon after Christ's death, say A.D. 35-45, and to our present three having superseded them in a few years, say A.D. 50-70, or at all events before the destruction of Jerusalem in the latter year; and hence they were most likely written by the Evangelists to whom they have been universally ascribed.

(B.) THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

We pass on now to consider a collateral argument of great importance derived from the Acts of the Apostles. This book is admitted by critics of all schools to be by the same writer as the Third Gospel, as is indeed obvious from the manner in which both are addressed to Theophilus, the perfect agreement in style and language, and the use in common of about fifty words not found elsewhere in the New Testament. Hence arguments for or against the antiquity of the Acts affect the Third Gospel also, and therefore, to some extent, all the Synoptic Gospels. We need not examine the external testimony to the book, since, though considerable, it is not nearly so strong as that to the Gospels; but, as we shall see, it has very strong *internal* marks of genuineness.

(a.) *Its accuracy.*

And first as to its extreme accuracy. This book, unlike the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 27. 8.

Gospels, deals with a large number of public men and places, many of which are well known to us from secular history, while inscriptions referring to others have been recently discovered. It is thus liable to be detected at every step if inaccurate; and yet, with one or two very doubtful exceptions, such as the date of the rebellion of Theudas,<sup>1</sup> no error can be discovered. As this is practically undisputed, we need not go into the vast mass of evidence there is on the subject, but will select three examples only.

(1.) *The titles of various rulers.*—And we will commence with the *titles* given to different rulers. As is well known, the Roman provinces were of two kinds, imperial and senatorial, the former being governed by *proprætors*, and the latter by *proconsuls*, though they frequently changed hands. Moreover, individual places had often special names for their rulers; and yet in every case the writer of the Acts uses the proper titles. This is the more important because he was not specially writing about these matters, when he might be supposed to have studied the subject, but his allusions are all incidental, and yet all correct.

For example, the ruler at Cyprus is rightly styled *proconsul*; for though Cyprus had previously belonged to the Emperor Augustus, it had been exchanged with the Senate for some other provinces before the time in question. And a coin recently found there has the words in Greek, *Paulus proconsul*, probably the Sergius Paulus of the Acts. Cyprus, it may be added, subsequently changed hands again. In the same way Gallio is correctly described as *proconsul* of Achaia. For though this province was imperial under Tiberius, and later on independent under Nero, it was senatorial under Claudius, when the writer referred to it. At Ephesus the mention of *proconsul* is equally correct; so also is the title of *governor* applied to both Felix and Festus; while the ruler of Malta is called neither *proconsul*, nor *proprætor*, nor *governor*, but merely *chief-man*; the accuracy of which title is proved by inscriptions found there.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acts 5. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 13. 7; 18. 12; 19. 38; 23. 26; 26. 30; 28. 7.

Again, Herod Agrippa, shortly before his death, is styled *king*. Now we learn from other sources that he had this title for the last three years of his government (A.D. 41-44), though there had been no king in Judæa for the previous thirty years, nor for many centuries afterwards. Moreover, his son is also called *King Agrippa*, though it is implied that he was not king of Judæa, which was governed by Festus. And this, though remarkable, is quite correct; for we learn that the Roman Emperor considered him too young to succeed to his father's dominions at once, and he never obtained Judæa at all, though, at the time alluded to, he was king of some of the neighbouring provinces. And it may be added, the remarkable fact of his sister *Bernice* acting with him on public occasions is fully corroborated by Josephus.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly the names *prætors* and *lictors* for the magistrates and sergeants at Philippi are quite correct, since that was a Roman colony, though they would not be proper elsewhere. At Thessalonica, again, the magistrates are called *politarchs*, translated "rulers of the city;" a name which, though not found in connection with this place in any other writing, yet remains in an inscription there to this day.<sup>2</sup>

(2.) *The riot at Ephesus*.—As a second example we will take the account of the riot at Ephesus.<sup>3</sup> All the allusions here to the worship of Diana, including her image believed to have fallen from heaven, her magnificent shrine, the small silver models which were used as charms, her widespread worship, and the fanatical devotion of her worshippers, are all in strict agreement with what we know from other sources.

Moreover, inscriptions recently discovered there have corroborated the narrative in a remarkable manner. They have shown that the *theatre* was the recognised place of public meeting; that there were certain officers (who presided at games, &c.) called *asiarchs*; that another well-known Ephesian officer was called the *town-clerk*; that Ephesus had the

<sup>1</sup> Acts 12. 1, 20; 25. 13, 23; Josephus, *Antiq.* xviii. 6, xix. 5; *Wars*, ii. 12, 16; *Life*, xi.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 16. 22, 35; 17. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 19. 23-41.



curious designation of the *temple-keeper* of Diana, an inscription with this identical title having been found ; that *temple-robbing* and *profaneness* were both crimes which were specially recognised by the Ephesian laws ; and that the term *regular assembly* was a technical one in use at Ephesus.<sup>1</sup>

All this minute accuracy is hard to explain unless the writer knew Ephesus remarkably well, or else was present during the riot, and recorded what he actually saw and heard ; the objection to the former hypothesis being that the writer must have known other places equally well, for the same accuracy is observable throughout.

(3.) *Undesigned coincidences*.—Our third example shall be of a different kind from the preceding. If we compare the biography of St. Paul given in the Acts with the letters of that Apostle, many of them written to the very Churches and persons described there, we shall find a complete though unobtrusive agreement between them. These undesigned coincidences are both numerous and striking, and very unlikely for a forger to have thought of. To discuss this evidence fully would, of course, require a separate volume like the *Horæ Paulinæ* of Paley. Here we must confine ourselves to a single Epistle, and select that to the *Romans*, which is one of those universally admitted to be genuine. Though not actually dated, it was evidently written at the close of St. Paul's second visit to Greece, and before he set out on his last journey to Jerusalem ; and thus, if mentioned in the Acts, would come in at 20. 3. Its incidental notices, as we shall see, are all consistent with this time and place in the biography ; though had the latter been arranged on purpose for this agreement, it is at least strange that the writer should not have mentioned the Epistle at all.

To begin with, St. Paul says that he was going up to Jerusalem, with alms from Macedonia and Achaia for the poor in that city.<sup>2</sup> In the Acts it is stated that St. Paul had

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Acts 19. 29, 31, 35, 37, 39, with inscriptions found in the Great Theatre, given in Wood's "Discoveries at Ephesus," 1877, pp. 43, 47, 53, 51, 15, 39.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 15. 25, 26.

just passed through these provinces, and was on his way to Jerusalem, though there is no mention about the alms here. But it happens to be retrospectively alluded to some chapters later, without, however, mentioning then where the alms came from.<sup>1</sup>

We also learn that Aquila and Priscilla were at Rome at the time St. Paul wrote, and deserved the thanks not only of himself but of all *Gentile Churches*.<sup>2</sup> Now in the Acts we read that they had originally come from Rome,<sup>3</sup> and that though Jews themselves, they had evidently sided with St. Paul in his dangerous work of preaching to the Gentiles at Corinth, so it was only natural that all Gentile Christians should feel specially grateful to them. They then returned with St. Paul to Ephesus, and as they did not accompany him on his second visit to Greece, it is not improbable that they returned to Rome. Thus, according to the Acts, at this time, and at this time only, these friends of St. Paul might have been at Rome.

We also learn that St. Paul's missionary travels up till now had extended from Jerusalem *even unto Illyricum*.<sup>4</sup> Now Illyricum is not once mentioned throughout the Acts, so there cannot be any intended agreement, but yet there is agreement. For we gather from various places that St. Paul had preached from Jerusalem all through what we now call Asia Minor, and just before the date of this Epistle had gone through Macedonia, which was his limit in this direction.<sup>5</sup> And as this was the adjacent province to Illyricum, it exactly agrees with the Epistle.

Among other points of undesigned agreement may be mentioned the fact that St. Paul had long wished to visit Rome, and intended doing so after his visit to Jerusalem; that his feelings were very despondent as he set out on his return journey to that city, having doubts as to what would befall him there; and that Timothy, Gaius, and Sosipater among others were with him when he wrote; while, lastly, the whole Epistle shows that St. Paul was a zealous advocate

<sup>1</sup> Acts 19. 21; 24. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 16. 3, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 18. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 15. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 20. 2.

of the Gentile Christians, claiming for them the same privileges as for the Jews. And assuming that he preached and acted as he wrote, this fully accounts for the charges which are said in the Acts to have been brought against him on his arrival at Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

In regard to all these passages, it should be noticed that the coincidence is in every case *undesigned*. This is the whole point of the argument, though, unfortunately, bringing the statements together in the above abbreviated form often gives the idea that they are almost identical, and might easily be copied one from the other. But any one who will take the trouble to compare the parallel statements with their contexts will see that this is out of the question. In other words, the writer of the Acts did not gain his information on these points from this Epistle. The manner in which he alludes to them, the different circumstances with which he connects them, and the extremely natural and unaffected way in which they are introduced, together with the fact that the agreement is often only partial and indirect, negative such a conclusion.

But then there is only one other alternative. It is that the incidents are not only true, but that the writer of the Acts, whoever he was, had *independent knowledge* of their truth. But if so, considering that these incidents include not only outward facts, such as the extent of St. Paul's travels, but also his own plans, feelings, and sympathies, it follows that the writer of the Acts must have been an intimate companion of his. And, as before said, this is a mere sample of the evidence. The whole of the above are selected from six out of eighty-three examples given by Paley, most of them connected with the Acts. And it should also be noticed that this evidence is cumulative in the strictest sense. If one coincidence is thought to be precarious, or possibly not undesigned, it may be dismissed without any detriment to the rest.

While, however, there are thus numerous slight and undesigned coincidences, several more obvious ones do not occur. For instance, St. Paul's list of his sufferings<sup>2</sup> is in excess of

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 15. 23, 25, 30; 16. 21-23; Acts 19. 21; 20. 4, 22, 23; 21. 19-21.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. 11. 25.

those recorded in the Acts. This is an evidence of genuineness, for had a late writer, who must have known the Epistle, been forging the Acts, he would probably have made them agree. And much the same may be said with regard to certain apparent discrepancies between the Acts and Galatians. They can indeed be easily reconciled. But what if they could not? A late writer must have known Galatians, and must have known that his readers knew it too; and is he likely to have seemed to contradict it?

We may now sum up the evidence as to the accuracy of the Acts. The above instances are only specimens of many which might be given. The writer knew Jerusalem and Athens equally well as Ephesus. While his account of St. Paul's voyage from Cæsarea to Italy, including as it does the topography of a variety of places, the climate, prevailing winds, and harbours of the Mediterranean, and the phrases and customs of seamen, is so accurate, that critics of all schools have admitted that he is describing a voyage he had actually experienced. In short, the Book of the Acts is full of correct details throughout, and it is hard to believe that any one but a contemporary could have written it.

(b.) *Its unity.*

We have next to consider whether the book was the work of a single man or a compilation. As is well known, certain portions are written in the first person plural, and are commonly called the "We" sections.<sup>1</sup> The most obvious explanation of this, and the one that has been universally received by the Church, is that the writer was a *companion* of St. Paul during these portions of his travels; and the internal evidence is strongly in favour of a common authorship for these sections and the rest of the book.

In the first place, the *language* is extremely similar, there being numerous coincidences in style, and the use in common of several words peculiar to the Acts and the Third Gospel. This is indeed so striking, that critics who maintain a different authorship admit that the compiler who incorporated the

<sup>1</sup> Acts 16. 9-40; 20. 5-21. 18; 27. 1-28. 16.

earlier *We* sections in his own narrative re-wrote them to some extent in his own style. But this would require great literary skill on his part, and it is inconceivable that he should have allowed the tell-tale *We* to remain at all. It is clearly the first thing he would have altered.

Moreover, besides the agreement in language, the two parts are essentially one in their *teaching*. Thus they both represent the Sadducees, not the Pharisees, as chiefly hostile to the Church.<sup>1</sup> And this is the more remarkable since the Gospels would have led us to expect otherwise; though it is easily accounted for when we remember that the Sadducees differed from the Pharisees in denying any resurrection, while the chief doctrine of Christianity was the resurrection of Christ. It is also a sign of early date, for the distinction between the Pharisees and Sadducees would have been of no interest after the fall of Jerusalem.

There are also slight *historical* connections between them. A single example must suffice here. In the earlier chapters several incidents are recorded, in which Philip the deacon was concerned;<sup>2</sup> and there does not seem any obvious reason why these should have been selected. The writer was not present himself, and many far more important events must have occurred, of which he gives no account. But a casual verse in the *We* sections explains everything:<sup>3</sup> the writer, we are told, stayed *many days* with Philip, and of course learnt these particulars then. And as it seems to have been his rule only to record what he knew for certain,<sup>4</sup> he might well have left out other and more important events, of which he had not such accurate knowledge.

With all this evidence, then, in favour of the *unity* of the book, why, it may be asked, do some critics wish to split it up? The reason is of course to get rid of any contemporary evidence as to *miracles*. The book as a whole is full of miracles, and yet its marks of genuineness in some places are too strong to be denied. Accordingly, the *We* sections, which have per-

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Acts 4. 1; 5. 17; 23. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Acts 6. 5; 8. 5-13, 26-40.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 21. 8-10.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 1. 3.

haps the stronger marks of genuineness, and certainly the fewer miracles, are alone allowed to be authentic. Here, it is said, we have the original non-miraculous diary of one of St. Paul's companions, which some later writer of the second century published with many marvellous additions of his own, besides re-writing the whole in his own style.

Now we need not discuss any theory resting on a disbelief in miracles here, but it may be mentioned in passing, that this particular theory is untenable from every point of view, being improbable, inadequate, and opposed to all the evidence. It is *improbable*, because a late writer could hardly have obtained so exclusive possession of such a diary as to be able to publish an 'improved' edition of it without any one detecting the fraud. It is from its own point of view *inadequate*, because, as a matter of fact, the *We* sections do contain several miracles ;<sup>1</sup> while many of the others (*e.g.*, the riot at Ephesus) bear equally strong marks of genuineness. And it is opposed to all the *evidence*, because there is not only the universal testimony of antiquity in favour of the unity of the book, but, as we have seen, the book itself bears strong marks of unity throughout.

(c.) *Its authorship and date.*

Now if we admit the accuracy and unity of the book, there is little difficulty in deciding on both its authorship and date. From the book itself we learn that the writer was a *companion* of St. Paul in many of his travels, including his voyage to Rome, where he apparently stayed with him two years. There is also another and independent reason for thinking that the writer was a personal friend of St. Paul, and this is from the account of St. Paul's *speeches*. We have numerous letters of this Apostle, and thus know his style and language well ; and on examining the speeches attributed to him all through the Acts, we find that they are thoroughly *Pauline* in character. In particular may be mentioned his speech at Athens, which so closely resembles the style of St. Paul, and so little resembles that of the writer of the Acts, that even hostile critics

<sup>1</sup> Acts 16. 16, 26 ; 28. 6, 8.

have been forced to admit its genuineness, though it may be added it does not occur in the *We* sections.

And yet, strange to say, the writer does not appear to have known St. Paul's Epistles, at least there are no obvious quotations from them, and in his biography of St. Paul he never once alludes to his having written any letters at all. This latter circumstance alone would point to the great antiquity of the book, and, when combined with the former, it clearly indicates that the writer's acquaintance with St. Paul's language was derived not from his writings, but from himself ; in other words, that he was his intimate friend. But it is urged on the other side that some of these speeches also show traces of the writer's own language. But what if they do ? Would it not be only natural for a writer who heard St. Paul's speeches, and afterwards wrote them down from memory, to have occasionally introduced an expression of his own ? On the other hand, if a second-century writer had got possession of some genuine speeches of St. Paul, he is more likely to have quoted them verbatim.

We also learn indirectly from the book itself that the writer was a *medical man*. The evidence for this is overwhelming, but as the fact is generally admitted, we need not discuss it at length. Suffice it to say that 201 places have been counted in the Acts, and 252 in the Third Gospel, where words and expressions occur which are specially, and many of them exclusively, used by Greek medical writers, and which, with few exceptions, do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. And it may be noticed, they occur all through the Acts, thus forming another mark of the unity of the book.<sup>1</sup> For instance, to quote but three examples, we read of the many proofs of the resurrection ; the word translated *proofs* being frequently used by medical writers to express the infallible symptoms of a disease, in opposition to its mere signs, which may be doubtful, and they expressly give it this meaning. We read of the restoration of all things ; the word translated *restoration* being the regular medical term for a complete recovery of body or

<sup>1</sup> Hobart's "Medical Language of St. Luke" (1882).

limb. And we read of a great sheet let down at four corners; the words translated *sheet* and *corners* being the medical terms for a linen bandage and its ends.<sup>1</sup>

From internal evidence then we conclude that the writer was an intimate friend of St. Paul and a medical man; and from St. Paul's Epistles we learn his name, *Luke the beloved physician*.<sup>2</sup> In confirmation of this it may be mentioned that both this Epistle and that to Philemon, where St. Paul also names Luke as his companion, are generally supposed to have been written from Rome, when, as we have seen, the writer of the Acts was with him. And he seems to have remained with him to the last.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, this beloved and ever-faithful friend of St. Paul is not once named in the Acts, which would be most unlikely unless he were the author himself; while many other friends of St. Paul are mentioned, and in such a way as to show that they could not be the writer.<sup>4</sup>

And the *date* of the book can also be fixed with tolerable certainty. It is implied in its abrupt ending. The last thing it narrates is St. Paul's living at Rome, two years before his trial. It says nothing about this trial, nor of St. Paul's release, nor of his subsequent travels, nor of his second trial and martyrdom. Had it been written after these events, it could hardly have failed to record them, more especially as the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul, which, according to early tradition, occurred together at Rome, would have formed the most suitable ending for a book chiefly concerned with their labours.

On the other hand, the abrupt ending is at once accounted for if we assume that the book was written at that time, about A.D. 63, by St. Luke, who did not relate anything further, because nothing further had then occurred. And it is obvious that these two years would not only have formed a most suitable period for its compilation, but that he is very likely to have sent it to his friend Theophilus just before the trial, not knowing whether it might not involve his own death, as well as that of St. Paul. On the whole, then, there is *very strong*

<sup>1</sup> Acts 1. 3; 3. 21; 10. 11.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. 4. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Col. 4. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 15. 22; 20. 4.



evidence in favour of the genuineness of the Acts of the Apostles ; and, as before said, this proves the same authorship, and an even earlier date for the Third Gospel.

(C.) THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

We pass on now to the Fourth Gospel, and will first examine its strong internal marks of authenticity, and then the two counter-arguments, said to be derived by comparing it with the Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Revelation.

(a.) *Its authenticity.*

In the first place, it appears that the writer was a *Jew*. This is shown by his frequently quoting the Old Testament, and twice from the Hebrew instead of the Septuagint, where there is a difference between them.<sup>1</sup> He was also well acquainted with the Jewish feasts, and he alone has recorded Christ's attendance at these feasts. We thus learn, what is not stated in the Synoptics, that Christ's public ministry lasted more than one year, since three Passovers are mentioned, as well as two other festivals.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the writer shows complete knowledge of Jewish customs, those in regard to purification being frequently mentioned.<sup>3</sup> He was also well aware of Jewish prejudices, such as the ill-feeling against the Samaritans ; while his own Jewish sympathies are shown by his recording the passage that salvation is from the Jews.<sup>4</sup> This must be either the genuine utterance of Christ, or else the invention of a Jewish, not a Gentile or Gnostic writer. The only counter-argument is from the frequent use of the term *the Jews* ; but this does not necessarily show that the writer was not a Jew himself, but merely that his intended readers were not. A Jew writing for Gentile Christians might certainly use the phrase.

Secondly, the writer was a *native of Palestine*. This is shown by his intimate acquaintance with its topography. He knows, for instance, several small places, such as Cana of Galilee, Bethsaida, Ænon, and Sychar. Moreover, he is very familiar

<sup>1</sup> John 13. 18 ; 19. 37.

<sup>2</sup> John 2. 13 ; 6. 4 ; 13. 1 ; 7. 37 ; 10. 22.

<sup>3</sup> John 2. 6 ; 3. 25 ; 11. 55 ; 18. 28 ; 19. 31.

<sup>4</sup> John 4. 22.

with Jerusalem, and this is specially important, as that city was only a heap of ruins after A.D. 70. Thus he speaks of Bethesda, the pool near the sheep-gate, having five porches; of Solomon's porch; of the pool Siloam, which he correctly derives as the *sending forth* of waters; of the brook Kedron; of the place that is called the Pavement, or Gabbatha; of the place of a skull, or Golgotha; and of the Temple with its oxen, sheep, and doves for sacrifice, and its money-changers for changing foreign money into Jewish, in which alone the Temple tax could be paid. He also knew that the Temple had been forty-six years in building up to the time of Christ's ministry. This deserves to be specially noticed, because neither Josephus nor any one else expressly says that the Temple was begun by Herod B.C. 18; it can only be inferred by combining various passages. Nor do the Synoptics expressly state the time of Christ's ministry; this also has to be got inferentially. Suppose, now, the words were really spoken by the Jews, and recorded by one who heard them, all is plain; they would have known the time well. But is it likely that a later writer should have taken the trouble to make such a calculation merely to have introduced the number in the way he has done? It is quite needless for the argument, and *many years* would have done just as well.

Thirdly, the writer appears to have lived in the *first century*. This is probable, because the controversies discussed in the Gospel are such as would have had no interest even early in the second century. Then the important disputes were about the Gnostic theories as to the origin of evil, as well as such questions as the time of celebrating Easter, and Church government. But none of these are even alluded to in the Gospel, and this alone makes it unlikely to be the work of that age; for the writer was sure to have taken one or other side in those controversies, and, if a forger, would not have scrupled to introduce some favourable evidence into his pretended Gospel. On the other hand, the duty of observing the Sabbath is discussed at length, which would have had no interest in the second century. Moreover, the Gospel is full of the hopes of the Jews, of a temporal Messiah, and the expectations

they had formed about Him, which, of course, perished with Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Fourthly, the writer appears to have been an *eye-witness* of what he describes. He twice asserts this himself, as well as in an Epistle which is generally allowed to be by the same writer, where he positively declares that he had both seen, heard, and touched his Master.<sup>2</sup> So, if not true, the work must be a deliberate forgery, written with the object of deceiving its readers; and this is certainly unlikely. Moreover, the whole narrative seems to imply that the writer was an eye-witness. For instance, he frequently identifies himself with the original disciples, recording their feelings and reflections in a way which would be very unlikely for any forger to have thought of.<sup>3</sup> He is also very minute as to places, persons, and times, even mentioning the hour of the day on several occasions.<sup>4</sup> While some of his narratives are so extremely graphic, such as that of the visit of the disciples to the tomb, that it is difficult to believe that the writer was not present at the time, being, in this particular case, the unnamed companion of St. Peter.

Lastly, if we admit that the writer was an eye-witness, it can hardly be disputed that he was *St. John the Apostle*, even apart from external testimony, since he records several things which none but an apostle would have known. And were he any one else, it is strange that an apostle of such importance as St. John should not be once mentioned in the Gospel. It is also significant that the other John, who is described in the Synoptics as John the *Baptist*, to distinguish him from the Apostle, is called in this Gospel merely *John*. No confusion could arise if, and only if, the writer himself were the Apostle John. While still more important is the fact that in the last chapter, which seems to be a sort of appendix to the Gospel, we have the solemn declaration of St. John's disciples, who knew him personally, that he was its author;

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, John 7. 27, 31, 42; 12. 34.

<sup>2</sup> John 1. 14; 19. 35; 1 John 1. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, John 2. 11, 17, 22.

<sup>4</sup> John 1. 39; 4. 6, 52.

and testimony more ancient or more conclusive can scarcely be imagined.<sup>1</sup>

The only internal argument on the other side is that the Gospel is written in good Greek, and that therefore a Galilean fisherman like St. John could not have been its author. But he may have employed a Greek disciple to write it for him, or else he may have lived in some Greek city, such as Ephesus, long enough to know the language well. It has also been pointed out that the Greek of this Gospel, though good grammatically, does not show a thorough acquaintance with the language, and is even *Hebraic* in character. An example will show what is meant. In Hebrew the same connecting particle is used for *but* as well as for *and*, while in Greek it is otherwise. Now in this Gospel the writer commonly uses the simple *and*, even where the sense so plainly requires a *but* or *then*, that it has been so translated in the Authorised, though not always in the Revised Version.<sup>2</sup> Anyhow this objection is quite insufficient to outweigh the strong internal evidence on the other side.

(b.) *Its connection with the Synoptic Gospels.*

But, as before said, there are two other arguments against the authenticity of this Gospel, deduced by comparing it with the Synoptics and the Book of Revelation respectively. The first objection is that the Christ of the Fourth Gospel is almost a different person from the Christ of the Synoptics. His miracles with one exception are all different, and so are His discourses both in substance and in style. His character is also different, since, instead of inculcating mere moral virtues, as in the Sermon on the Mount, the Christ of the Fourth Gospel keeps asserting His own Divine character. While, lastly, where the Gospels do necessarily cover the same ground there are discrepancies between them. From all this it is urged that the Fourth Gospel is evidently unhistorical, and written long after the time of Christ, when the Church held high views concerning His Divinity. This objection is really threefold, and each part of it admits of a complete and satisfactory answer.

<sup>1</sup> John 21. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, John 7. 19, 30, 33.

To begin with, the fact that the Fourth Gospel narrates *different* events and discourses in the life of Christ from what we find in the other three, and this to an extent which can scarcely be accidental, must of course be admitted. But what then? Why should not one biography of Christ purposely narrate certain events in His life, which the writer thought important, but which had been omitted in previous accounts? This is what occurs frequently at the present day. For instance, one Life of General Gordon may deal with his character as a soldier, laying stress on his military achievements; another may consider him as a philanthropist, laying stress on that aspect of his character, and naturally illustrating it by other events in his life; while yet another may consider him as to his religious views. So in the case before us. The fact, then, that the Fourth Gospel describes different events and discourses from the other three is no argument against their all being literally true. It may have been intentionally written to *supplement* these other accounts.

Nor is this merely conjecture, for there is strong evidence from the Gospel itself that it was actually written with some such purpose. Thus the writer refers to many events without expressly describing them, and in such a way as to show that he supposed his readers knew about them. For instance, St. Andrew is first introduced as Simon Peter's brother, thus assuming that the readers know who Simon Peter was. He also assumes that they know about St. John the Baptist being imprisoned, about Joseph being the reputed father of Christ, and the appointment of the Twelve.<sup>1</sup>

Again, in several places various *objections* are introduced without the answer being given, such as the statement about Christ being born at Nazareth.<sup>2</sup> The objection here was that the Jewish Messiah should have been born at Bethlehem, whereas Christ's parents lived at Nazareth. The answer, as we know from the Synoptics, is that though his parents lived at Nazareth, they happened to have gone to Bethlehem at the time of His birth. Now the writer of this Gospel, whoever

<sup>1</sup> John 1. 40; 3. 24; 6. 42, 70.

<sup>2</sup> John 1. 46; 7. 42.

he was, undoubtedly believed the Old Testament prophecies, and also that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah; and yet he leaves the apparent discrepancy unexplained. Doubtless he assumed his readers to know the answer.

Moreover, many important events in Christ's life are *omitted* altogether, such as His Baptism, His instituting the Eucharist, and His Ascension; while the fact that they are perhaps incidentally alluded to<sup>1</sup> only increases the probability that the Gospel was written for well-instructed Christians, who possessed some other biographies of Christ. And everything points to these being our present Synoptic Gospels.

The next part of the objection is that the *Character* assigned to Christ in the Fourth Gospel is different from that in the other three. This need not be considered here, as it is discussed in Chap. xxi., and shown to be quite untenable. All that can be said is that the Fourth Gospel asserts the Divinity of Christ more controversially and dogmatically than the other three, which only imply it. And very probably the writer did so intentionally, thinking that this aspect of Christ's character had not been sufficiently emphasised in the previous biographies. But even were we to admit the difference to be as great as is alleged, it would only show the authenticity of the Gospel. For who but an apostle could have written a Gospel ascribing a new character to Christ, which should have been so soon accepted by the whole Church?

A more important objection is that the *style of language* ascribed to Christ in the Fourth Gospel seems different from that in the Synoptics. This is no doubt true, but we have in these other Gospels at least one specimen of similar style.<sup>2</sup> And this shows that Christ did occasionally speak in this manner; and there is no reason why St. John should not have purposely preserved such discourses because the other Evangelists had neglected to do so. It is also worth notice that the writer never puts his favourite expression, the Logos or Word of God,<sup>3</sup> into the mouth of Christ, which an unscrupulous biographer would certainly have done.

<sup>1</sup> John 1. 32; 6. 53; 20. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 11. 25; Luke 10. 21.

<sup>3</sup> John 1. 1; 1 John 1. 1; Rev. 19. 13.

Lastly, as to the *discrepancies*. Many of these can be explained satisfactorily; possibly all could if we had fuller knowledge. But even if discrepancies exist, the inference against the genuineness of the Fourth Gospel does not follow. For the writer, whoever he was, must certainly have lived after the Synoptics were in circulation, and, as we have seen, probably wrote to supplement them. Now, if he were an obscure Christian, or lived many years after the events of which he pretended he was an eye-witness, he would have been careful not to contradict the received accounts. But if he were the Apostle John, writing from memory after the lapse of many years, he might well narrate things slightly different from the others, and, considering his own authority, would not have thought it necessary to make his account harmonise with theirs. Slight discrepancies, then, between the Fourth Gospel and the other three are no argument against the former.

On the other hand, there are several *undesigned coincidences* between them which are a strong argument in favour of the accuracy of both. A single well-known example must suffice here. It refers to the feeding of the five thousand, which is the only miracle the Gospels have in common. St. Mark says this was performed in a desert place, where Christ had gone to rest for a while, and to avoid the crowd of persons who were coming and going at Capernaum. But he gives no hint as to why there was this crowd just at that time.<sup>1</sup> St. John says nothing about this temporary seclusion, nor of the great crowd which occasioned it; but he happens to mention, what perfectly explains both, that it was shortly before the Passover.<sup>2</sup> Now we know from Josephus and other sources that at the Passover enormous multitudes flocked to Jerusalem from all sides, so that Capernaum, which lay on a main road from the north, would naturally be thronged with persons 'coming and going;' and this explains everything.

Moreover, another incident, though very trifling, deserves mention. We are told by St. John, and by him alone, that

<sup>1</sup> Mark 6. 31.

<sup>2</sup> John 6. 4.

Christ's question as to whence bread could be obtained was addressed to Philip. We are told by St. Luke, and by him alone, that the miracle was wrought near Bethsaida. And we read in St. John, though in quite a different part, that Philip was of Bethsaida.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, then, being a native of the place, he was most likely to know where bread could be bought. But the peculiar fitness of addressing the question to him rather than to the other disciples we have had to find out for ourselves from a casual expression in another Gospel, it not being hinted at in St. John. In all this there is 'much of coincidence but little of design.' Can any one think that the writer of the Fourth Gospel purposely made his account harmonise with the others, and yet left the agreement so incidental that not one reader in a thousand ever discovers it? The only reasonable explanation is that the event was actually true, and that the various writers had independent knowledge of this.

The objection, then, as to the connection of the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptic ones must be put aside. It was plainly meant to be their supplement, not their substitute; it shows not a different Christ, but a different aspect of the same Christ; while the slight discrepancies, especially when combined with the undesigned coincidences, support its genuineness.

(c.) *Its connection with the Book of Revelation.*

The other objection is perhaps a more important one. The Book of Revelation is now generally admitted by all critics to be the work of St. John. Indeed, the evidence in favour of this is very strong, both internal and external, since it is expressly assigned to St. John by Justin Martyr.<sup>2</sup> And yet it is said it cannot be by the same writer as the Fourth Gospel for three reasons. The first is, that while the Gospel and First Epistle are *anonymous*, the Revelation is not so. But this is easily explained, since in the Old Testament the Historical Books are nearly always anonymous, and the Prophetical ones never so; and a Jew might naturally follow this example.

<sup>1</sup> Luke 9. 10; John 1. 44; 6. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Dial. ch. lxxxii.



Secondly, there is considerable *difference in style*. But this is partly accounted for by the difference in subject-matter; the Gospel being a plain historical narrative, and the Revelation a complicated prophetic vision. And the same writer, when treating of a different subject, or writing for a different purpose, or even at a different time of life, often uses a different style. Moreover, there are several striking resemblances in language, so that on the whole this objection is of little weight.

The third reason is, that the *Greek* of the Revelation is very abrupt, with numerous faults of grammar, and quite unlike that of the Gospel and First Epistle. But this can be easily explained if the writer was accustomed to Aramaic; and though he knew Greek well enough for a simple history like the Gospel, was yet unable to compose a difficult work like the Revelation in that language. It can also be explained if the Revelation was written when the writer knew very little Greek, and the Gospels some years later when he knew it much better. Or again, the former may have been written by St. John himself, while for the latter he may have had the assistance of a Greek disciple. On the other side, it must be remembered that though the two books are different in language, they are the same in their teaching; for the characteristic doctrine of the Fourth Gospel, that of the Divinity of Christ, is asserted almost as plainly in the Revelation.<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, then, this objection is not an insuperable one, while, as already shown, the Fourth Gospel has very strong internal marks of genuineness. And when we combine these with the equally strong external testimony, it forces us to conclude that St. John was the author. This Gospel, then, like the Synoptic ones, must be considered *authentic*; indeed, the evidence in favour of them all is overwhelming.

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. xxi.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THAT THEREFORE THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS PROBABLY TRUE

Importance of the Resurrection ; meaning of First Witnesses. The value of all testimony depends on four questions concerning the witnesses, and in this case the denial of each corresponds to the four alternative theories.

(A.) THEIR VERACITY.

Did they speak the truth as far as they knew it ? (1) The witnesses were generally truthful ; (2) and had no motive for preaching the Resurrection unless they believed it ; (3) while their conduct (*i.e.*, their sufferings) showed them to be thoroughly convinced of it ; so we may dismiss the *Falsehood* Theory at once.

(B.) THEIR KNOWLEDGE.

Had they the means of knowing the truth ? If the Gospels are authentic, amply sufficient means were within their reach, and they were quite competent to use them ; so the *Legend* Theory must also be dismissed.

(C.) THEIR INVESTIGATION.

Did they avail themselves of these means ? There were strong reasons for their doing so, but possibly they did not, from their excited state of mind. This is the *Vision* Theory, which, however, has enormous difficulties.

(D.) THEIR REASONING.

Did they draw the right conclusion ? Admitting that Christ's appearances were real, might it not be explained by His not having died ? This *Swoon* Theory, as it is called, has also enormous difficulties.

(E.) THEIR COMBINED TESTIMONY.

We have *confirming* testimony in five independent accounts, while the absence of *conflicting* testimony strengthens the argument. The alleged difficulties of the Christian Theory. Conclusion.

WE decided in the last chapter that the Four Gospels, and also the Acts of the Apostles, were *authentic* ; that is to say, they were actually written by the writers to whom they are

commonly ascribed. And to these may be added the four great Epistles of St. Paul, which, as before said, are admitted to be genuine by critics of all schools. We have thus direct testimony as to the alleged teaching and miracles of Christ, that is to say, the testimony of contemporaries, some of whom must have known Him well.

We have now to consider the value of this testimony, more especially as to the alleged *Resurrection of Christ*, which fact, either real or supposed, was the foundation of Christianity. This is plain not only from the *Gospels*, but still more from the *Acts*, where we have as many as eleven specimens of short sermons addressed to non-Christians, five by St. Peter, five by St. Paul, and one by St. Stephen. Two of these were interrupted before conclusion. In one other the reference to Christ's Resurrection is doubtful; while in each of the remaining eight it is not only positively asserted, but is frequently emphasised as a fact established by indisputable evidence, and as being the foundation of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> It is even said that it was the special duty of an apostle to bear witness to it; and St. Paul seems to have been aware of this, since, in maintaining his apostleship, he is careful to show that he was thus qualified.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the Resurrection is assumed throughout the *Epistles*. St. Paul makes it the *sine quâ non* of his preaching.<sup>3</sup> And every ancient writing, genuine or spurious, for or against Christianity, concurs in representing it as part of the Christian Religion, received without doubt by all professing Christians from the very first. Indeed, from the nature of the case, the Crucifixion must have destroyed the claims of Christ but for a real or supposed Resurrection; and He Himself is stated to have referred to this as authenticating His mission.<sup>4</sup> It is certain, then, that the earliest preachers of Christianity preached the Resurrection of Christ.

Now we have five different accounts of the Resurrection,

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2. 24; 3. 15; 4. 10; 5. 30; 7. 54; 10. 40; 13. 30; 17. 31; 22. 22; 24. 21; 26. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 1. 22; 1 Cor. 9. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, 1 Cor. 15. 12-19.

<sup>4</sup> John 2. 19.

besides the frequent allusions to it in the Acts; though little stress can be laid on St. Mark's account, as the genuineness of the last verses is doubtful. On the other hand, St. Paul's account, which is perhaps the strongest, is universally allowed to have been written within thirty years of the event. We need not quote these accounts here, but the following table exhibits them in a convenient form for reference.

TABLE OF CHRIST'S APPEARANCES.					
<i>Christ was seen by</i>	<i>1 Cor.</i>	<i>Matt.</i>	<i>Mark.</i>	<i>Luke.</i>	<i>John.</i>
(i.) St. Mary Magdalene . . .	...	...	16. 9-11	...	20. 11-18
(ii.) Several women . . .	...	28. 1-10	(1-8)	24. (1-12)	...
(iii.) St. Peter . . .	15. 5	...	...	... 34	...
(iv.) Cleopas and another } at Emmaus . . .	...	...	12-13	13-32	...
(v.) The Apostles and } others (less St. } Thomas) . . .	5	...	14?	36-49	19-23
(vi.) The Apostles (with } St. Thomas) . . .	...	...	..	...	26-29
(vii.) Seven Apostles at } Sea of Tiberias . . .	...	...	...	...	21. 1-22
(viii.) Over five hundred } persons . . .	6	...	...	...	...
(ix.) The Apostles in Gali- } lee . . .	...	16	...	...	...
(x.) St. James . . .	7	...	...	...	...
(xi.) The Apostles at } Bethany . . .	7	...	...	50-52?	...
(xii.) St. Paul . . .	8	...	...	...	...

Altogether, Christ seems to have been seen on twelve different occasions, though, as none of our accounts contain a complete list of these, there may have been others which are not recorded. Of course it may be said that these incomplete lists imply that the writers were ignorant of the other appearances, and that this discredits the whole story. But, with the doubtful exception of St. Paul, such a supposition is quite needless. The Evangelists nowhere profess to give a complete list of His appearances, any more than of His miracles or parables; but they only record selected instances. And the fact of their not reproducing St. Paul's list is a distinct argu-

ment in favour of their early date. For had they been written after the Epistle had got into circulation, it is scarcely conceivable that they should have disregarded it in so important a matter; unless, of course, they were written by men whose authority would be as little questioned as that of St. Paul himself.

Now we will use the term *First Witnesses* for all those persons who are stated to have seen Christ's Body after His Resurrection. This will include the eleven Apostles, St. Paul, and over 500 other Christians, among them being probably St. Luke, the unnamed companion of Cleopas. And though we have no writings of most of these persons, and therefore cannot say for certain that they stated themselves that they had thus seen Christ, it is extremely probable. St. Paul, for instance, asserts in undisputed Epistles that St. Peter and St. James had had private interviews with Christ, and that he had himself conversed with these Apostles at Jerusalem; so he must clearly have learnt it from themselves.<sup>1</sup> He also appeals to over half of the 500 persons he mentions as being still alive, and evidently as able to corroborate what he said. There is thus no practical doubt that the whole of the persons who are said to have seen Christ after His Resurrection, *i.e.*, the First Witnesses, stated themselves that they had done so.

And before discussing the value of their testimony, it may be well to glance at certain general rules in regard to all testimony. If, then, a person plainly asserts that an event took place, before we believe that it did take place we must inquire first as to his *Veracity*: did he speak the truth as far as he knew it? Next as to his *Knowledge*: had he the means of knowing the truth? Next as to his *Investigation*: did he avail himself of those means? And lastly, as to his *Reasoning*: did he draw the right conclusion?

The following examples will show the sense in which these terms are used. Suppose a person said that he went to London yesterday. Usually his veracity only need be determined.

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 1. 18.

But now suppose he were blind, then we should have to assure ourselves of his knowledge: had he the means of knowing whether the place was London or not? And granting that he had such means—as, for instance, if trustworthy friends accompanied him—we might still have to inquire as to his investigation: did he avail himself of those means? Possibly he felt sure it was London, and never asked his friends. Or again, suppose the person was a child; then his reasoning must be determined: was he sufficiently educated to draw the right conclusion from all the facts before him? As a second example, suppose a man says that a particular room he went into was sixteen feet long. His veracity may be admitted; also his knowledge, as there was a two-foot measure lying on the table; also his investigation, as he may have been seen to measure the room; and yet his reasoning may be wrong, as, through some carelessness, he may have thought the measure only went eight instead of nine times along the room.

Before passing on, it should be noticed that all possible ways of denying the truth of a statement can be brought under one or other of these heads. For if a man's statement is not true, it must be either:—

Intentionally false . . . . .	=	want of Veracity.
or	{	had not the
Unintentionally	means of	. . . . .
false, in which	knowing the	= want of Knowledge.
case he either	truth . . . . .	
	}	
	or	{ did not use
	had the means,	them . . . }
	and either	or
		= want of Investiga-
		tion.
		{ used them
		or
		= want of Reasoning.
		wrongly }

From this it is clear that for any one to deny a man's statement without disputing his veracity, knowledge, investigation, or reasoning, is very much like denying that one given angle is greater than another without disputing that it is neither equal to it nor less than it. We have now to apply these general rules to the testimony in favour of the Resurrection of Christ.

## (A.) THE VERACITY OF THE FIRST WITNESSES.

Now, that the first witnesses all asserted that Christ rose from the dead and appeared to them is, as we have seen, indisputable; so obviously the first question is as to their veracity: did they really believe this themselves? To deny this would be to adopt the *Falsehood Theory*, which is that they were deliberate impostors, who, knowing and believing that their Master did not rise from the dead, yet tried to persuade people that He did. And it will be seen that their character, their motives, and especially their conduct, are all strongly opposed to such a theory.

(1.) *Their character.*—This can be best judged by the religion they founded; and every one will admit that Christianity, inculcating as it does truthfulness and other moral virtues, is not likely to have been founded by men who were themselves impostors, and based their religion on what they believed to be untrue. Nor is there a single instance of intentional inaccuracy which can be imputed to any of them on critical grounds. Moreover, these very accounts of the Resurrection bear every sign of truthfulness. The style is throughout free and unaffected. The writers appear to narrate just what they believed to have happened, often mentioning the most trivial circumstances, and without ever attempting to meet difficulties or objections; while the disjointed, and to some extent discordant, narratives are precisely such as we should expect from the actual witnesses of a stupendous miracle, and are not such as would have been deliberately invented. Nor is it conceivable that writers of fiction would have made Christ first appear to such a person as Mary Magdalene rather than to His mother or His apostles.

Again, the *kind* of Resurrection asserted was not one likely for impostors to have chosen. It was not, as before said (Chap. xv.), a Resurrection of Christ's natural body, but His Resurrection in a body which combined material and spiritual properties in a remarkable manner. And there was nothing in the Old Testament, or anywhere else, to suggest such a Resurrection as this; it was quite unique. Nor is it likely that impostors would have ascribed an *altered appearance*

to Christ's body, so that He was often not recognised at first. Nor, again, would they have said that some of them *doubted* the Resurrection, which was hardly the way to get other people to believe it. We conclude, therefore, that the general character of the first witnesses is strongly against their speaking what they believed to be untrue, while their narratives are in many respects the very opposite to what impostors would be likely to have written.

(2.) *Their motives.*—We next come to their motives. The importance of this is obvious, for a person generally veracious might not speak the truth either to gain some advantage to himself, or through fear of the consequences, such as a criminal declaring himself innocent. And of course the testimony of any one who would derive benefit if what he asserted were believed is not worth so much as that of an unbiassed witness. Similarly the testimony of an unbiassed witness is not worth so much as that of one whose interest is the other way.

Now to apply this to the case before us. Admitting that the first witnesses were generally truthful, had they any special motive for not speaking the truth on this one subject, *i.e.*, was it to their interest to assert that Christ rose from the dead unless they really believed it? To merely answer that it was not to their interest, and that they could have had no special motive, would be to understate the argument immensely. Every motive told the other way. The enterprise was extremely hazardous, and the difficulties in the way of its success were enormous. The Apostles and their friends were a mere handful of men, so few or so faint-hearted as not to have been able to prevent their Master being crucified; indeed, their cowardice in running away when He was arrested is recorded by themselves, and must have been well known. What chance was there, then, of persuading the world that He had risen from the dead, and why should impostors have embarked on such an apparently hopeless scheme?

It may indeed be safely asserted that the success of the enterprise was so extremely unlikely, that nothing except



the most firm conviction of the reality of their Master's Resurrection, and therefore of supernatural assistance, would ever have induced men to have ventured on it. If they believed the Resurrection to be true, then, and only then, would they have had any reason whatever for preaching it. While, then, it is plain that the Apostles were not *unbiased* witnesses, in the sense of witnesses who had no personal interest in the matter, it is equally plain that their evidence is the more valuable on this account, as all their interest was the other way.

(3.) *Their conduct.*—We pass on now to the last and most important point. Did the conduct of the first witnesses show that they really believed what they preached? And here also the evidence is overwhelming. It is admitted by every one that when their Master was crucified His followers were filled with gloom and despair. This was only natural. But in a few days this sorrow was changed to intense joy and confidence. They preached the Resurrection in the very place where He was crucified, and boldly went forth to convert the world in His name. It is clear that before such a marvellous change could take place, they must, at all events, have thought they had, what St. Luke asserts they actually did have, *many proofs* of the Resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, in preaching such an extraordinary event, especially in cultured cities like Rome and Corinth, the first witnesses would have been subjected to more than usual cross-examination. Some at least in every city would have used all possible means of finding out the truth, and impostors could hardly have stood, or withstood, such an inquiry. And yet St. Paul's Epistles show that within twenty-five years the Resurrection was believed by numbers of men in these distant cities.

But even this is not all, for the conduct of the first witnesses in preaching the new religion exposed them to life-long *suffering* and *persecution*; and this is a very important point, so we must examine it in some detail. Now voluntary

<sup>1</sup> Acts 1. 3.

suffering in any form is most important evidence as to a man's veracity ; for persons do not suffer for what they believe to be false, unless of course they hope to gain some advantage from it later on. But such hopes cannot apply to the extreme case of martyrdom, which seems conclusive as to a man's veracity. It is probable that no one has ever suffered martyrdom for what he believed to be false ; he must have believed it to be true. This does not of course prove that it was true, for perhaps he had not the means of knowing whether it was true or not. For instance, a Mahometan may die rather than deny that Mahomet was sent by God ; a Christian may die rather than admit it ; but it is plainly a point which neither has the means of knowing for certain, so the evidence merely proves that each thought himself right. And here is the answer to the common objection, that since all religions have had their martyrs, this kind of evidence proves nothing. On the contrary, it does prove something, though it does not prove everything. It does not prove that what the man died for was true, but it does prove that he believed it to be true. It is therefore a conclusive test as to his veracity.

What evidence have we, then, that the first witnesses suffered for the truth of what they preached ? The evidence is complete and overwhelming. To begin with, each of the *Four Gospels* represents Christ as foretelling the persecution of His immediate followers, *i.e.*, the first witnesses.<sup>1</sup> And without assuming that He really did this, it is clear that such words would not be subsequently put into His mouth as a pretended prediction unless the event corresponded with it.

In the next place, the *Acts of the Apostles* directly records the sufferings which several of them, such as St. Peter, St. John, St. James, and St. Paul, had to undergo. And it should be noticed that this book is not avowedly an account of persecutions, but the sufferings are merely recorded as part of the general history, and without any apparent exaggeration.

Lastly, the admittedly genuine *Epistles of St. Paul* fully support this conclusion. For in one of them he gives a list

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 10. 17 ; Mark 13. 9 ; Luke 21. 12 ; John 16. 2.

of the actual sufferings he had then undergone ; which, it may be noticed, is in excess of those in the Acts, showing that the sufferings there recorded are far from complete. He also alludes to his sufferings in numerous other places, and often as if they were the common lot of all Christians at the time ; while in one passage he expressly includes the other Apostles in the long list of sufferings he describes, which he says had made them a spectacle to the whole world. Moreover, elsewhere he alludes to the sufferings of the Christians at a still earlier time, for he assures us that he himself before his conversion persecuted the Church beyond measure and made havoc of it.<sup>1</sup>

And if further evidence is required, it is afforded by the *Book of Revelation* ; for this speaks not only of sufferings, but of martyrdoms, voluntarily endured by Christians ; and considering its early date, which is generally admitted, this must have been contemporary with the first witnesses.<sup>2</sup> While it may be added, the fact of their persecution under Nero is confirmed by Tacitus, the only classical writer who alludes to the Christians at this early period.<sup>3</sup> There can thus be no doubt about the constant sufferings of the first witnesses. And it is equally certain that men do not choose a life of suffering except upon conviction. The men, therefore, who did this must have believed their religion to have been true, and this always included the resurrection of Christ as a fundamental part. In short, their conduct is alone sufficient to prove their veracity, for impostors would not have behaved as they behaved.

We conclude, therefore, in favour of the *veracity* of the first witnesses. To deny this would be, as before said, to attribute their actions to imposture and fraud—namely, that knowing and believing their religion to be false, they yet spent their whole lives in trying to persuade people that it was true ; and this without any conceivable advantage to themselves, but rather with the certainty of suffering and persecution through

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, 2 Cor. 11. 24-27 ; Rom. 8. 18, 35 ; 1 Cor. 4. 9-13 ; 15. 19 ; Gal. 1. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Rev. 1. 9 ; 2. 13 ; 17. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Annals*, Bk. xv. ch. 44.

life, and probably a martyr's death. And this argument is further strengthened when we consider the character of the men, the nature of their undertaking, and the extreme difficulties attending it. There is thus a very great probability, amounting to almost a certainty, in favour of their veracity; in other words, that when they asserted that Christ rose from the dead, they were asserting what they honestly believed, whether rightly or wrongly, to be true.

Before passing on, there is an important deduction from allowing the veracity of the first witnesses, which is that their own writings must be admitted as showing their real convictions. And this greatly simplifies the following discussion, for these writings give us the *reasons* for their belief in Christ's Resurrection. This belief, we learn, was not the result of any *a priori* reasoning or philosophical speculation, but it resulted simply from the witnesses believing that they actually saw Him alive after His death under certain recorded circumstances.

A single example will show the importance of this. Take the case of St. Paul. His sufferings merely show that he honestly believed that Christ rose from the dead; and if we knew nothing more about him, it might be difficult to say whether this belief was well founded or not. But in his writings he tells us the reasons for his belief.<sup>1</sup> Now it is plainly incredible that St. Paul should honestly believe that Christ rose from the dead, and yet give false reasons for his belief, so we are bound to conclude that he honestly believed in the particular appearances he records. And extending the same argument, we arrive at the conclusion that the first witnesses honestly believed in the appearances of Christ as recorded by themselves and their intimate companions in the New Testament. We may assume, then, that these accounts are not *intentionally* false.

(B.) THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIRST WITNESSES.

We pass on now to their knowledge: had they the means of knowing whether Christ rose from the dead? To deny

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 1-8.

this would be to adopt the *Legend Theory*, which is that our Gospels are not authentic, but merely record subsequent legends, and therefore we cannot say whether the first witnesses had or had not the means of knowing the truth. But if we admit the authenticity of the writings and the veracity of the writers, both of which have been admitted, this legend theory is quite untenable.

They asserted, it will be remembered, that Christ's Body, not His Spirit, appeared to them after the crucifixion; and from their own accounts it is clear that they had ample means of finding out whether this was true. Whether they used these means, and actually did find out, is, of course, another question; but as to sufficient means being available there can be no doubt whatever. As has been well said, it was not one person, but many who saw Him; they saw Him not only separately, but together; not only by night, but by day; not only at a distance, but near; not once, but several times; they not only saw Him, but touched Him, conversed with Him, ate with Him, and examined His Person to satisfy their doubts. Further argument as to these witnesses is quite needless, for, according to their own accounts, Christ seems to have convinced them in every way in which conviction was possible that He had really risen from the dead.

The case of St. Paul is, however, somewhat different. He evidently thought the appearance to him was real, as he classes it with the others, and does not include in his list mere visions, like that to St. Stephen, of which he must have known. And as he was travelling with companions, he must have had sufficient means of knowing whether anything strange really happened, or whether it was all due to his own fancy. Moreover, the subsequent blindness was a fact as to the truth or falsehood of which there could have been no doubt. And as to the rest of the appearances, he had intercourse with the other first witnesses when at Jerusalem, and being an educated man, is not likely to have been taken in by imposture. And when we add to this the fact that his Epistles are admittedly genuine, and written within thirty

years of the event, the legend theory in regard to any of the appearances seems out of the question.

We conclude, therefore, that sufficient means for finding out the truth were within reach of all the first witnesses; and, it need scarcely be remarked, they were quite *competent* to avail themselves of these means. With the doubtful exception of St. Paul,<sup>1</sup> they seem to have known their Master intimately, and no special education or scientific training was necessary to know whether the Person Who came among them was their Master or not. Nor is there any sign of mental derangement in their writings, or anything to lead us to suppose that they were unable to use ordinary means of finding out the truth.

(C.) THE INVESTIGATION OF THE FIRST WITNESSES.

By the investigation of a witness is meant, as before explained, his availing himself of the means he had of ascertaining the truth or otherwise of what he stated. And the probability of his doing so depends partly on external conditions, such as the surrounding circumstances, and partly on internal conditions, such as his own feelings at the time.

With regard to the former, the *external* conditions were altogether in favour of the first witnesses using the means they had of finding out the truth. For the Resurrection of Christ was an event of supreme importance to the witnesses themselves, who were prepared to risk their lives for it; while its truth or otherwise could easily have been ascertained, and they had frequent opportunities of doing so.

If, then, their investigation is denied, it must be under the second head of *internal* reasons, those arising from their own state of mind, their enthusiasm, or their excitement, or something of that kind. This would be to adopt what is called the *Vision Theory*, which is that the Apostles so expected their Lord to appear to them after His death, and kept so dwelling on the thought of Him as, though unseen, yet perhaps very near to them, that after a time they thought they actually did see Him; and finally mistook this

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 5. 16.

phantom of their own imagination for a reality in the outer world, and believed that He had really risen from the dead. The wish was, in fact, father to the thought; so that when a supposed appearance took place, they were so certain that it was their risen Master, and so filled with joy at His presence, that they neglected to ascertain whether the appearance they saw was real, or only due to their own fancy.

With regard to this theory, we must at once admit the credibility of an honest man's mistaking a phantom of his own brain, arising from some diseased state of the mind or body, for a reality in the outer world. Such *subjective* visions are by no means unheard of, though they are not common. And of course the great argument in its favour is that it professes to account for the alleged Resurrection, without on the one hand admitting its truth, or on the other that the witnesses were deliberate impostors. Here, it is urged, is a way of avoiding both difficulties, by allowing that the witnesses honestly believed all they said, only they were mistaken in supposing the appearances to be real and objective, instead of merely subjective, and due to their own imagination. It is plain, then, that intentional falsehood is not to be imputed to them on this theory, *i.e.*, it admits their veracity.

Let us now consider how this vision theory would suit the accounts of the Resurrection written by the witnesses themselves. As will be seen, we might almost imagine that they had been written on purpose to contradict it. To begin with, the writers were not unacquainted with visions, and occasionally record them as happening to themselves or others. But then they always use suitable expressions, such as falling into a trance.<sup>1</sup> No such language is used in the Gospels to describe the appearances of Christ, which are recorded as if they were actual matters of fact; and this alone renders the theory improbable.

Next, it is plain from all the accounts that the Apostles did not *expect* the Resurrection, and were much surprised at it.

<sup>1</sup> Acts 10. 10; 22. 17.

There may indeed have been some lingering hope as to the third day, which was doubtless revived by the report of the empty tomb, but the general feeling was one of despondency; they had *hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel*.<sup>1</sup> We have here a record of blighted hopes very different from such a state of enthusiasm and expectation as would have imagined the Resurrection. Moreover, the accounts of the appearances themselves show conclusively that they were unexpected. With regard to iii., viii., x., xi., in the above table, we have no details, and so no means of judging. In only one case, ix., did Christ meet His Apostles by appointment; while in vi. He might possibly have been expected. In every other case His appearance was wholly unexpected. No one was looking for it, no one was anticipating it. And it may be added, the appearances were not of such a kind as would have been suggested by enthusiasm. They were simple, plain, and often trivial in their character, very different from what enthusiasm would have suggested. And, with the single exception of that to St. Paul, they ceased within a few weeks, though the enthusiasm of the witnesses lasted through life; and this abrupt cessation is of itself a strong argument against the vision theory.

Thirdly, and this is very remarkable, when Christ did appear to His disciples, He was often not *recognised* at first (i., iv., vii.). But it is plain that, if they so hoped and expected to see their risen Master, that they eventually fancied they did see Him, they would at once have recognised Him. Their not doing so is quite incompatible with the vision theory, and hence, if this theory is true, the record of these appearances at least must be intentionally false, for in each case His not being recognised is an essential part of the incident.

Fourthly, we are repeatedly told that at first some of the disciples *disbelieved* or *doubted* the Resurrection.<sup>2</sup> This is an important point, since it shows that opinions were divided on the subject, and therefore makes it almost certain that they would have used what means they possessed of finding out the

<sup>1</sup> Luke 18. 33; 24. 21. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 28. 17; Mark 16. 11-14; Luke 24. 11, 37; John 20. 15, 25.



truth. Indeed, initial doubt as to an event is always a strong argument in favour of the investigation of any one who afterwards asserts it. These doubts, then, tell equally against the vision theory as against that of falsehood; for if they were enthusiasts, doubts would not have occurred, just as if they were impostors they would not have been recorded. Moreover, some of the Apostles remained doubtful even after the others were convinced, and St. Thomas in particular required the most convincing proof. His state of mind was certainly not that of an enthusiast, since, instead of being so convinced of the Resurrection as to have imagined it, he could with great difficulty be got to believe it. Indeed, according to these accounts, scarcely one of the first witnesses believed the Resurrection till the belief was almost forced on him. If, then, the vision theory is true, this necessitates an additional portion of our accounts being altogether untrue.

In the next place, subjective visions do not occur to different persons *simultaneously*. Such a phenomenon may perhaps happen to one person in ten thousand once in his life. It is difficult to believe that even two persons should be so affected at the same time, while the idea that a dozen or more men should simultaneously see the same subjective vision is out of the question. And yet only four out of the twelve appearances were to individuals.

But sixthly, this hypothesis does not account for many of the actual *facts* recorded—facts concerning which, unless the writings are intentionally false, there could be no doubt whatever. Persons could not have honestly believed that they *touched* a Being, *i.e.*, took hold of His feet, if He existed only in their imagination, for the attempt to touch Him would at once have shown them their mistake. Nor could they have seen Him *eat food*, for a subjective vision would not explain the disappearance of the food.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, how are we to account for visionary *conversations*? Is it possible that two persons could have walked several miles, and have honestly believed there was a *Third* walking and talking with them

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Matt. 28. 9; Luke 24. 39, 43.

all the way; this Third being due to their own imagination, and yet not recognised till just at the close? In all these cases, then, and many others, the vision theory is hopelessly untenable. It does not even account satisfactorily for the one appearance, that to St. Paul, which it might be thought capable of explaining. Physical blindness does not follow a subjective vision, and to say that in his case the wish was father to the thought, and that his expectation and hope of seeing Christ eventually made him think that he did see Him, is absurd. Here was the case of an avowed enemy and a man of great intellectual power, who was converted solely by the appearance of Christ.

Lastly, there is one great difficulty in the vision theory, which is independent of all our accounts, and rests on the single fact that it was within a few days of the crucifixion that the Apostles first heard of the Resurrection. This difficulty lies in the non-production of the *dead Body* by the Jews. No amount of enthusiasm or heated imagination, or anything of that kind, could go so far as to say that a man's body was restored to life (ate, talked, walked, and was touched), if the corpse was lying before them all the time. So the *presence or absence* of the body seems alike fatal to the theory of subjective visions due to enthusiasm. If it could have been found, the Jews would have produced it, rather than invent the story about its being stolen; and if it could not be found, fraud, not enthusiasm, must have made away with it.

Summing up these arguments, we conclude that the *Vision Theory* is most improbable in any case, and can only be accepted at all by admitting that nearly the whole of our accounts are not only untrue, but intentionally so. But on such a supposition it is quite needless. Its object was to explain the alleged Resurrection without impugning the *veracity* of the writers, and this it is quite unable to do. In short, if the writers honestly believed the accounts as we have them, or indeed any other accounts at all resembling them, the Vision Theory is out of the question.

Under the head of denying the investigation of the first witnesses comes another theory, though one seldom adopted,

which is that of an impostor pretending to be Christ. Many of the previous arguments would tell against this theory also, and it does not seem necessary to examine it in detail.

(D.) THE REASONING OF THE FIRST WITNESSES.

Lastly, there is the question of reasoning. Allowing that the alleged appearances were real, did the Apostles draw the right conclusion in thinking that their Master had risen from the dead? The opposite theory, which, however, was never hinted at by the early opponents of Christianity, is that Christ did not die at all, but only fainted on the cross, and being taken down, slowly recovered. And in support of this *Swoon Theory*, it is urged that death after crucifixion did not usually ensue so quickly, since we are told that Pilate  *marvelled if He were already dead*,<sup>1</sup> and that He might easily have been mistaken for dead, as no accurate tests were known in those days. Moreover, as He was then placed in a cool rock cave, a return to consciousness would probably ensue, when, of course, He would come forth and visit His friends. And they, superstitious men, looking upon their Master as in some sense divine, and perhaps half expecting the Resurrection, would at once conclude that He had risen from the dead. And being very faint He would probably at once ask for something to eat, which is precisely what He did according to St. Luke,<sup>2</sup> and not venture to appear publicly to the Jews. Neither of these two last points, it is urged, is satisfactorily explained on the supposition of a real resurrection of a Divine Christ.

Now with regard to this theory, its credibility must be admitted, since instances are known in which men have actually recovered from crucifixion. And the chief argument in its favour is, of course, the same as that in favour of the Vision Theory. It professes to account for the recorded appearances, without admitting either the truth of the Resurrection, or deliberate falsehood on the part of the witnesses, who, according to this theory, were themselves deceived in thinking that Christ had risen from the dead,

<sup>1</sup> Mark 15. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 24. 41.

when in reality He had never died. They could not therefore have helped in restoring Christ to consciousness; He must have recovered by Himself. This is essential to the theory; for if, after Christ was taken down and handed over to His friends, they had found that life was not extinct, and by careful tending and nourishing had gradually restored Him, this would indeed account for the appearances in a certain sense; but only by admitting that the Christians were impostors in saying that He had risen from the dead, well knowing that He had never died, and that all their stories about visits to the tomb were intended to deceive. But if we admit this, no such theory is necessary.

How then would this theory suit the facts of the case? While admitting its credibility, it is hard to find words to express its great *improbability*. It has immense difficulties, many of them peculiarly its own. And first as to Christ Himself. He must have been extremely exhausted after all the ill-treatment He had received; indeed, the piercing of His side with a spear would probably of itself have caused death. And yet in this exhausted state He is supposed not only to have recovered consciousness, but to have been able to come out of the sepulchre by Himself, rolling away the *exceeding great* stone.<sup>1</sup> And then he must have walked to Emmaus and back, and have appeared the same evening to His disciples so completely recovered that they, instead of looking upon Him as still half-dead, imagined that He had conquered death, and was indeed the Prince of life. All this implies a rapid recovery on Christ's part, and an amount of credulity on the Apostles' part, which are alike inconceivable.

And it is equally unlikely that so many persons, both friends and foes, should have mistaken Christ for dead. And yet according to this theory the guard intrusted with the execution, the centurion who was sent for by Pilate on purpose to ascertain this very point, the Christians who took down the body and carried it to the sepulchre, and the Jews who asked for a night-guard, must all have honestly believed that Christ

<sup>1</sup> Mark 16. 4.

was dead when He was not. Moreover, the sepulchre was carefully guarded by His enemies for the express purpose of securing the body, so as to be able to refute any alleged Resurrection. How then did they let it escape? Of course Christians explain this supernaturally, but the advocates of this theory cannot.

This theory also requires not only that the Apostles should have been deceived in thinking that Christ had risen from the dead, but that Christ Himself should have countenanced the deception, or He would have explained the truth to His disciples. Christ is thus made to be a deceiver instead of His Apostles, which all will admit to be most improbable. And yet the only other alternative is even more so, which is that Christ was Himself mistaken in thinking that He had really died, when He had not.

But perhaps the chief argument against this theory is that it does not account for the alleged appearances as they are recorded. In particular may be mentioned Christ's passing through closed doors and vanishing at pleasure, as well as His Ascension and subsequent appearance to St. Paul. These details present no difficulty on the vision theory, nor on that of deliberate falsehood, but they are inconsistent with the present one. Our conclusion, then, in regard to this *Swoon Theory* is precisely the same as that in regard to the vision theory, though for different reasons. It is that the theory is very improbable in any case, and only tenable at all by supposing a large part of our present records to be intentionally untrue. But then such a theory is quite needless.

We have now discussed the veracity, knowledge, investigation, and reasoning of the first witnesses of the Resurrection, and not one of these points can be fairly doubted. There is indeed an extremely strong probability in favour of each of them.

#### (E.) THEIR COMBINED TESTIMONY.

We have finally to consider what additional arguments, either way, are derived from the combined testimony of the first witnesses and their contemporaries. It will be convenient to divide this under the two heads of confirming and

conflicting testimony, and the presence or absence of each must of course be considered.

With regard to *confirming* testimony, we have five different accounts of the Resurrection. And that these are to a great extent independent is shown by the discrepancies between them, since no one can think that such writers purposely contradicted one another to make their accounts appear independent. And yet the substantial agreement of the narratives cannot be disputed, and the presence of all this confirming testimony greatly strengthens the argument. Under the head of absence of such testimony an objection may be raised, which is that all the Jews living at Jerusalem should have been convinced by the Resurrection. But according to the only accounts we have, every single person to whom Christ appeared, whether friend or foe (St. Paul), was convinced by it. The objection refers to His not going publicly into Jerusalem, and will be discussed later on.

On the other hand, it may be said that we have some *conflicting* evidence in the story about the Body being stolen, which, St. Matthew says, was current among the Jews.<sup>1</sup> And as Justin Martyr, himself a native of Palestine, alludes to it as still in circulation in his day, there can be little doubt that some such story existed.<sup>2</sup> How far it is really conflicting evidence is another matter. The guard of soldiers could scarcely have seen the disciples come and steal the body; and if they said, as stated by St. Matthew, that it was stolen *while they slept*, they plainly had not the means of knowing whether this was true, or whether Christ had come forth of His own accord. All, then, that the story proves is this, that though the Body was purposely guarded, yet when it was wanted it was gone and could not be found. But now to reverse the argument. Under these circumstances this incident as to the non-production of the dead Body comes under the head of absence of conflicting evidence. It is indeed a strong argument against nearly every theory except the Christian one. For when the Resurrection was first announced, the most obvious

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 28. 11-15.

<sup>2</sup> Justin, Dial. ch. cviii.

and decisive answer would have been for the Jews to have produced the dead Body, and the absence of *this* conflicting evidence is very corroborative of the Christian account.

Before leaving the subject a few remarks may be made on the alleged difficulties of the *Christian* theory. It may be said that by the foregoing method stress has been laid on the difficulties of every theory except the Christian one. The reason is that this theory has no difficulties of the same kind, for here we do not deny either the veracity, knowledge, investigation, or reasoning of the first witnesses, and are hence free from the difficulties attending such a denial. It is not of course meant that the Christian theory has no difficulties, but it has only one of any consequence. This is the philosophical one of how such a *miracle* as the Resurrection could occur at all. But admitting the credibility of this, the others are mostly unimportant. That a divine Christ, who was pleased to reassume His human body, should be able to roll away the stone from the sepulchre and to overcome the guard, presents no difficulty; nor that He should appear and disappear at pleasure in such a form as to be recognised or not as He willed it. And that He should have asked for something to eat seems to have been intended to satisfy His disciples of the reality of His risen Body; in fact, to disprove the vision theory, which they were rather inclined to adopt.

There is, however, still one objection which may be thought of some importance. It is Christ's not appearing *publicly* to the Jews. Why, it is asked, did Christ only appear to believers? Surely this is very suspicious. If He really did rise from the dead, and wished the world to believe it, why did He not settle the point by publicly going into Jerusalem? He would thus not only have completely triumphed over His enemies, but would have saved His followers many sufferings. The answer to this objection is threefold.

In the first place, the wording is somewhat ambiguous and misleading. It is of course admitted that Christ only appeared to those who had been His friends before His death (except St. Paul), and not to his enemies, or even to indifferent persons. But as to the fact of His Resurrection, those to

whom He appeared were not believers: it was only His repeated appearances that made them so. And every person to whom Christ appeared, no matter how unwilling he was to admit the Resurrection (*e.g.*, St. Thomas), was eventually compelled to do so, simply because the evidence was, or at all events appeared to him to be, overwhelming.

Secondly, it is at least open to doubt whether it would have *settled the point* if Christ had gone publicly into Jerusalem. No doubt the Jews who saw Him would have been convinced by it, but the nation as a whole might, or might not, have embraced Christianity. If they did *not*, which is the more probable on the Christian view, since they had already rejected many other miracles, the evidence in favour of the Resurrection would have been weakened enormously. A public entry into Jerusalem which did not convince the nation, but which, for example, they ascribed to a pretender, would have been worse than useless evidentially.

If, on the other hand, the Jewish nation had embraced Christianity, it is still doubtful whether the evidence would have been stronger than it is at present. No doubt the early Christians would have been saved many sufferings; but for this very reason their evidence would be less valuable, for we should have no satisfactory proof of their veracity. Thus, instead of having a few witnesses, whose sufferings assure us that they believed what they said, we should have many witnesses, but without such assurance. Moreover, had the Jews embraced Christianity as a nation, it would have weakened the force of *Prophecy* enormously, since, in the absence of ancient manuscripts, the assertion that the old Jewish prophecies had been tampered with, to make them suit their Christian interpretation, would be difficult to disprove. Now these prophecies have been preserved by hostile librarians, and are thus beyond suspicion. It is hence very doubtful whether Christ's going publicly into Jerusalem would have strengthened the total evidence in favour of Christianity.

But thirdly, even admitting that it would, what then? Can we say that it would be a probable event, or that its not taking place renders the alleged Resurrection improbable?



Certainly not; we have no means of deciding *a priori* how much evidence God would be likely to give to the Christian revelation, assuming it to be true. That the evidence would be sufficient to enable a man to believe it, without disregarding his intellect, also given by God, seems certain; while, on the other hand, that it would not be convincing to everybody has been already shown to be probable in Chap. vii. That the evidence in favour of the Resurrection falls well within these limits is obvious, and we have no means of deciding whether it ought to be more or less than it is. The important question is whether the evidence in favour of it is greater than that against it; and if so, the absence of still stronger evidence is no reason for disbelieving what we have. This objection then cannot be maintained.

In conclusion, it seems scarcely necessary to sum up the arguments in this chapter. Briefly stated they amount to this, that the accounts we have cannot be explained so as to exclude the Resurrection without avoiding *intentional* inaccuracy on the part of the writers; a conclusion quite untenable in view of the actual lives and sufferings of the men concerned. And it need scarcely be added that testimony borne by such men, and under such circumstances, has never yet been known to be false. We therefore decide provisionally that the Resurrection of Christ is probably true. Of course, no final decision can be come to till we have examined the other arguments for and against Christianity, all of which are to some extent arguments for and against the Resurrection of Christ, on which, as we have seen, Christianity was founded.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THAT THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT MIRACLES ARE PROBABLY TRUE

(A.) THEIR CREDIBILITY.

They are Evidential Miracles, and similar to those in the Old Testament; except the casting out of Evil Spirits, which, however, presents no great difficulty.

(B.) THEIR ALLEGED PUBLICITY.

(1) They are said to have occurred in public; (2) were publicly appealed to; (3) and were never disputed at the time either by Jews or heathen; (4) while all attempts to explain them away are hopelessly untenable.

(C.) THE SUBJECT OF LATER MIRACLES.

The objections from their alleged continuance and non-continuance cannot be maintained. Conclusion.

(A.) THEIR CREDIBILITY.

Having discussed in the last chapter the Resurrection of Christ, we pass on now to the other New Testament miracles, though it will not be necessary to examine them at length. And first, as to their credibility. This can scarcely be disputed, for they all claim to have been *Evidential Miracles*; and the three words used to describe them in the New Testament, *wonders*, *mighty works*, and *signs*, exactly correspond to the three aspects of such miracles (see Chap. viii.). Moreover, with one exception, they are similar to those in the Old Testament, only, as a rule, they present less difficulties. Most of them, especially the miracles of healing, were very suitable from a moral point of view; while that they were asserted to be evidential of Christ's mission is beyond dispute. Not only do the Evangelists assert this, but Christ Himself, though He refused to work a miracle when

challenged to do so, yet appealed to His *public* miracles on three separate occasions, and in the most emphatic manner. Thus, for example, when the Baptist sent messengers to inquire whether He was the Messiah, His only answer was, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up," &c.<sup>1</sup>

The exception above alluded to refers to the *casting out of evil spirits*, which has no parallel in the Old Testament. And as the whole subject of the existence and influence of spirits or angels is often thought to present great difficulties, we will briefly examine it. And first, as to the *existence* of angels. There is no difficulty here. Indeed, the whole analogy of nature would teach us that as there is a descending scale of beings below man; so there would be an ascending scale of beings above man—that is to say, between him and the Supreme Being. In other words, it is unlikely that created beings should form a complete chain from jelly-fish up to men, and then suddenly stop. This is rendered still more unlikely when we reflect on the small gaps there are in the descending scale, and the enormous gap there would be in the ascending scale if man were the next highest being in the universe to God. Perhaps this will be made clearer by adopting a numerical standard, though the inadequacy of such a standard is obvious. Suppose, then, the utmost possible intelligence, that of God Himself, to be represented by 1000; then that of man would not certainly be more than 10. And if we found a multitude of beings with intelligences varying from 0 up to 10, we should certainly infer that there must be some between 10 and 1000.

Moreover, that these higher beings, or some of them, should be entirely *spiritual*, *i. e.*, without material bodies, and therefore beyond scientific discovery, is not improbable. Indeed, the existence of such spiritual beings or angels is on *prima facie* grounds easier to believe in than the existence of a compound being like man, who is partly material and partly

<sup>1</sup> Mark 2. 10; Luke 7. 22; John 11. 42.

spiritual. And when we add to this the fact that man's superiority to lower beings lies in this very fact of his having a semi-spiritual nature, the idea that higher beings may have an entirely spiritual one seems distinctly probable. And that these angels should have as great, if not greater, intellectual and moral faculties than man seems certain; otherwise they would not be higher beings at all. And this necessitates their having *free will*, with the option of choosing good or evil, in popular language. And that, like men, some should choose one and some the other, seems equally probable. Hence the existence of both good and evil angels presents no difficulty.

Secondly, as to the *influence* of angels. Now that good angels should wish to influence man for good, and might occasionally be employed by God for that purpose, scarcely seems improbable. And on the other hand, that evil angels should wish to act, as evil men act, in tempting others to do wrong, is only what we should expect. And that they are able to do this is quite credible. For to assert otherwise would be to assert that a partly spiritual being, such as a man, could not be influenced by a higher spiritual being, such as an angel; which is on the face of it most unlikely, and quite contrary to the analogy of nature, where higher beings always seem able to influence lower ones. While that God should allow evil angels thus to tempt men to do wrong is no harder to believe than that He should allow evil men to do the same. There is thus no difficulty on *prima facie* grounds as to what is called demoniacal *temptation*.

But it may still be objected that we have no actual *evidence* of the influence of angels at the present day. But this is at least open to doubt. For what evidence could we expect to have? We could not expect to have any physical sensation, or anything capable of scientific investigation, for angels are by hypothesis spiritual beings. If, then, they were to influence man, say, by tempting him to do evil, all we could know would be the sudden presence of some wicked or evil thought in our minds, without, as far as we could judge, any previous cause for it. And who will assert that such a phenomenon is

unknown, or that, if known, it does not constitute all the proof we could expect of the action of an evil spirit?

Next as to demoniacal *possession*. Though our ignorance on the subject is great, there is nothing incredible here. Indeed, the phenomena of mesmerism at the present day, though they cannot always be trusted, seem to show that even one man may so entirely possess the mind and will of another as to make him do whatever he wishes. And it is certainly not more difficult to believe that this power may in certain cases be exercised by an evil spirit. With regard to the outward symptoms mentioned in the Gospels, they appear to have resembled certain forms of madness, instances of which still occur; though, as the patients are now kept under restraint in civilised countries, they have not the same notoriety. But it may be said, why ascribe this madness to an evil spirit? But why not? To do so is only to assign an adequate cause for a complicated mental disease of the nature of which we know next to nothing. And it is not even an improbable cause. As is well known, madness often follows the frequent yielding to certain temptations, such as drunkenness or impurity. And that this madness may really be due to the action of an evil spirit, and be the appropriate punishment for yielding to his temptation, is certainly not incredible. And if so, considering the grossly immoral state of the world at the Christian era, we cannot be surprised at such cases being far more common then than now.

There is, however, an undoubted difficulty in regard to the demoniacal possession of *animals*. But we have only a solitary example of this, the swine at Gadara, so it is little more than a *one-text* difficulty.<sup>1</sup> Still it is a difficulty, and I have never met with a satisfactory explanation of it; though our ignorance about animals, combined with the fact that they resemble man in so many respects, prevents us from asserting that it is absolutely incredible.

Lastly, the *cure* of demoniacal possession presents as an evidential miracle no difficulty whatever. Indeed, from an

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 8. 31.

evidential point of view it matters little what was the cause of the disease; for the malady was real, and the cure was real, and that is the important point. With regard to evil spirits, it is only fair to mention that the possibility of diabolical miracles, as they are called, that is, of real or apparent miracles wrought by these spirits, seems implied in the New Testament;<sup>1</sup> but as we have no instances to judge by, it is difficult to found an argument on this. We decide, then, that all the New Testament miracles are credible.

(B.) THEIR ALLEGED PUBLICITY.

Now the testimony in favour of all these miracles is very similar to that in favour of the Resurrection of Christ; they are recorded by the same writers and in the same Gospels, and everything points to these accounts being trustworthy. To put it shortly, the writers had no motive for recording the miracles unless they believed them to be true, and they had ample means of finding out whether they were true or not; while many of them are such as cannot possibly be explained by want of investigation or an error in reasoning. They are also closely interwoven with the ordinary history and the moral teaching of Christ, and it is difficult either to separate them or to believe the whole account to be fictitious. Moreover, in one respect the testimony in their favour is even stronger than that in favour of the Resurrection, and this is from their alleged *publicity*. As this is a most important point we must examine it in detail.

(1.) *They are said to have occurred in public.*—To begin with, many of the miracles are stated to have been performed openly and before crowds of persons; and hence, if not true, they could have been easily refuted. Moreover, as we have seen, written accounts of them existed within a few years; and documentary evidence as to public events is always important. It seems to challenge contradiction, and if none is forthcoming, its value is very great. Let us take a single example, say the feeding of the five thousand, to show the strength of this argument. This miracle is recorded in each

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 24. 24.

of the Four Gospels, and forms part of the so-called Triple Tradition, and must therefore have been written down very soon after the event, when a large number of the five thousand, perhaps the majority, were still alive. Now is it conceivable that any one would have ventured to make up such an account, even twenty years afterwards, if nothing of the kind had taken place? And if he had done so, would not his story have been instantly refuted? And of course the same argument applies in other cases. Indeed, it is hard to over-estimate the enormous difficulty of asserting *public* miracles if none occurred; and yet the early Christians asserted such miracles from the very first.

(2.) *They were publicly appealed to.*—Moreover, not only were these public miracles recorded in the first Gospels, but they were publicly appealed to by the first preachers of Christianity. According to the Acts, they are confidently appealed to in the very first public sermon, that at Pentecost by St. Peter, as well as in one other speech at least.<sup>1</sup> That they are not more frequently alluded to is not surprising when we remember that, according to the writer, the Apostles themselves performed miracles, and therefore there was no occasion for them to appeal to those of Christ as proving the truth of what they preached. Their own miracles were quite sufficient to convince any one who was open to this kind of proof. But still the important fact remains that in the first recorded Christian sermon the public miracles of Christ are publicly appealed to; and this was within a few months of their occurrence, and at Jerusalem, where the statement, if untrue, could have been more easily refuted than anywhere else. And even if we deny, though there is no reason for doing so, the accuracy of these speeches, the inference is none the less plain. For considering the early date of the Acts, they must anyhow be good imitations of apostolic preaching; and this equally shows that the first preachers of Christianity did at times appeal to the public miracles of Christ.

Next as to the New Testament *Epistles*. It is sometimes

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2, 22 ; 10, 38.

objected that these do not contain many references to Christ's miracles; but this is only natural. They were not written to convert heathens, but to instruct Christians, with whom of course the miracles would be presupposed. Nor did their subject-matter at all require the miracles to be touched upon, except the Resurrection of Christ. This was meant to have an important bearing on the life of Christians, and is therefore frequently alluded to.

But, on the other hand, they do contain direct reference to *Apostolic* miracles. St. Paul in three of his undisputed Epistles positively asserts that he had worked miracles himself. And he uses the same three words, *signs*, *wonders*, and *mighty works*, which are used in the Gospels to describe the miracles of Christ, and which, as far as we know, are never used to describe anything but miracles.<sup>1</sup> The second passage is extremely important, since he speaks of them as the *signs of an apostle*, and calls upon his opponents at Corinth to admit that he was an apostle *because* he had wrought these miracles; and this implies not only that the miracles were publicly performed, but that his readers as well as himself believed that the power of working miracles belonged to all the Apostles. And it will be noticed that both in this passage and in that to the Galatians he is addressing the very persons among whom he declares the miracles had been wrought. And this makes it almost inconceivable that his claim was unfounded, quite apart from the difficulty of believing that such a man as St. Paul would wilfully make a false statement. From all this it follows that the first preachers of Christianity not only appealed to Christ's miracles, but also to their own, in support of their claims. And, as just said, how they could have done this, if they performed no miracles, is not easy to understand.

We pass on now to a class of writings where we should expect to find Christ's miracles alluded to, and these are the first Christian *Apologies*. Nor are we disappointed. The three earliest of these, of which we have any knowledge, were written by Quadratus, Aristides, and Justin. *Quadratus*

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 15. 18, 19; 2 Cor. 12. 12; Gal. 3. 5.



addressed his Apology to the Emperor Hadrian (117-138 A.D.), and in a passage preserved by Eusebius he says, "The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real; both they that were healed and they that were raised from the dead were seen, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards; not only whilst He dwelt on this earth, but also after His departure, and for a good while after it; insomuch as that some of them have reached to our times." <sup>1</sup>

*Aristides* wrote about the same time (A.D. 125), and his Apology has recently been rediscovered. He bases his defence of Christianity on its moral character; and as it was often attacked for being immoral as well as irrational, there is nothing surprising in this. But though he does not appeal to the miracles or prophecies, yet in a brief outline of Christian doctrine he asserts the Divinity, Incarnation, Virgin-birth, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ.

Lastly, *Justin* in his Apology not only specifies many of Christ's miracles, but also says generally that Christ "healed those who were maimed, and deaf, and lame in body from their birth, causing them to leap, to hear, and to see by His word. And having raised the dead, and causing them to live, by His deeds He compelled the men who lived at that time to recognise Him. But though they saw such works, they asserted it was magical art. For they dared to call Him a magician and a deceiver of the people." <sup>2</sup> Justin, however, does not base his argument on miracles, but chiefly on prophecy, and fortunately has himself told us the reason for this. "But lest any one should meet us with the question, What should prevent that He whom we call Christ, being a man born of men, performed what we call His mighty works by magical art, and by this appeared to be the Son of God? we will now offer proof, not trusting mere assertions, but being of necessity persuaded by those who prophesied (of Him) before these things came to pass." <sup>3</sup> Thus two out of the three earliest apologists appealed to Christ's miracles

<sup>1</sup> Euseb. Hist. iv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Dial. ch. lxi.

<sup>3</sup> Apol. I. ch. xxx.

in the most public manner possible when addressing the Emperor.

(3.) *They were never disputed at the time.*—But now comes a most important point. Though these public miracles were publicly appealed to by the early Christians, and though written accounts of them were in circulation very soon after they are alleged to have occurred, yet, as far as we know, no refuting evidence was produced, certainly none has been preserved. And this is the more remarkable since the Christian miracles are said to have been performed among enemies as well as friends. They were thus open to the hostile criticism of an entire people; and yet, as far as we know, they were never disputed. On the contrary, judging by the only evidence we have, they seem to have been admitted both by Jews and heathens; though, of course, they both denied their evidential value.

The *Jews* did this by ascribing them to *diabolical agency*. And though this was a very wild expedient, considering that their effect was obviously good and not evil, they had really no alternative. Being Monotheists, if they denied that they were wrought by God, they were bound to ascribe them to the Devil, for these were the only supernatural powers they believed in. But we may ask, would they have adopted such an expedient had there been any possibility of denying their occurrence? And yet that they did adopt it can scarcely be disputed. It is positively asserted in each of the Synoptic Gospels; and it is most unlikely that the Evangelists would make a statement so easy to refute, unless it had been the case; especially as it was against their interest to allow that the miracles did not convince those who saw them.<sup>1</sup> Nor is it conceivable that Christians should have reported such a horrible insinuation as that their Master was an agent of the Evil One, unless it had actually been made. It should also be noticed that the chief priests are said to have been so angry at the miracles that they sought to kill Christ in consequence, but never thought of denying that they were done.<sup>2</sup> From

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 12. 24; Mark 3. 22; Luke 11. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, John 11. 47.

all this it follows that the Jews admitted the Christian miracles, but denied their evidential value by adopting the violent, though in their case only possible, alternative of ascribing them to the Devil.

But why, it may be asked, if the Jews admitted Christ's miracles, did they not acknowledge His claims, instead of ascribing them to the Evil One, and finally demanding His death? The answer is very instructive. The Jews as a nation no doubt admitted His miracles, and were in consequence quite willing to acknowledge Him as the Messiah. The multitude, we read, wished to make Him a king by force, escorted Him triumphantly into Jerusalem, and were so attached to His cause that the authorities were afraid to arrest Him openly.<sup>1</sup> But, as we shall see in Chap. xxi., Christ claimed to be far more than a mere Jewish Messiah: He claimed to be *God*. Now, as just said, the Jews were firmly devoted to Monotheism; any one, therefore, who claimed to be God was of necessity in their eyes a blasphemer. And the chief priests, knowing this, not only accused Christ of blasphemy, but actually got Him to assert His Divine claims on His trial.<sup>2</sup> This at once detached the multitude from His side; and though only a few days before they hailed Him as the Son of David, they now with perfect consistency demanded His death. However much they were convinced of His miracles, they were still more convinced of Monotheism. And therefore, if a man who asserted that he was God performed miracles, they could only ascribe them to the Devil.

On the other hand, the *Heathen* were in no such dilemma. They believed in a variety of gods, many of whom were favourable to mankind, and could be invoked by *magic*. And therefore they could consistently ascribe the miracles to some of these lesser deities, or, in popular language, to magic. And we have abundant evidence that they did so. As we have seen, it is expressly asserted by Justin, who in consequence preferred the argument from prophecy; and Irenæus did the same, and for avowedly the same reason.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 21. 9; 26. 5; John 6. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 26. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Bk. ii. ch. xxxii.

Moreover, besides these general statements, we know that *Celsus*, the most important opponent of Christianity in the second century, also adopted this view. His works are now lost, but Origen in answering him frequently and positively asserts it. For instance, "Celsus, moreover, unable to resist the miracles which Jesus is reported to have performed, has already on several occasions spoken of them slanderously as works of sorcery." And elsewhere he quotes the explanation of Celsus, which was that Jesus, "having been brought up as an illegitimate child, and having served for hire in Egypt, and then coming to the knowledge of certain miraculous powers, returned from thence to his own country, and by means of those powers proclaimed himself a God."<sup>1</sup> And it may be noticed that though Celsus lived some years after the time in question, it is scarcely conceivable that, if the early opponents of Christianity had denied that the miracles occurred, its later opponents should have given up this strong line of defence, and have adopted the far weaker one that they did occur but were due to magic.

From all this it is plain that the heathen, as well as the Jews admitted that the miracles actually occurred, though they both explained away their significance. And this is indirectly confirmed by *Josephus*. A well-known passage in his *Antiquities*<sup>2</sup> describes Christ as "a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works." It then alludes to His alleged Resurrection, and ends with the curious remark, "The tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day." The *wonderful works* here referred to were evidently superhuman, *i.e.*, miraculous, since it was in consequence of these that the writer doubted whether it were lawful to call Him a Man. And though the authenticity of the passage has been much disputed, and perhaps rightly so, it matters little to our present purpose. For no *Christian* in those days, when they were so eagerly looking for the Second Coming of Christ, would have described his religion as a sect not yet extinct. So, if not the words

<sup>1</sup> Origen cont. Cels. ii. 48; i. 38.

<sup>2</sup> xviii. 3.

of Josephus, they must be the addition of a *Jewish* or *Roman* editor, who, doubtless considering the great stir Christianity was making, thought it a blot in his history for Josephus not to have alluded to it, and therefore inserted the passage. But this is equally good evidence that the non-Christians of those days did not deny that the miracles actually occurred, though, as before said, they denied their evidential value. Of course, Josephus must have known Christianity well, and his silence in regard to Christ is very suggestive. Doubtless that unique Character so perplexed him that he thought it best to leave it untouched.

Now the above passages show beyond doubt that it was possible for men in those days to admit that Christ wrought miracles without becoming Christians. Of course, at the present day, if we believed that miracles took place, we should adopt the religion connected with them. But, as we have seen, it was not always so, and when the Christian miracles occurred it was quite possible for men to fully admit their occurrence and yet to reject the religion, saying they were due either to the Devil or to magic. Such attempts at getting out of the difficulty are now universally condemned, and any one who admits the miracles admits the religion they were meant to attest.

The only argument on the other side is from the *silence* of classical writers. Had the miracles really occurred, it is said, especially in such a well-known place as Palestine, the writers of the day would have been full of them. But, with the single exception of Tacitus, they do not even allude to Christianity, and he dismisses it with contempt as a *pernicious superstition*.<sup>1</sup> Now these words of Tacitus are rather important. They show that he had never studied the subject, for whatever may be said against the religion, it certainly was not in those days pernicious; so that he must have rejected Christianity *without examination*.

Now if the other classical writers did the same, there is nothing remarkable in their not alluding to it. If, on the

<sup>1</sup> Tac. Annals. Bk. xv. ch. 44.

other hand, they rejected it *after* examination—if, that is, they considered its alleged miracles, and were not convinced by them—it is probable that they would have noticed it. What, then, is the inference to be drawn from this? It is scarcely adverse to Christianity, for the writers of the first century belong, with the solitary exception of Tacitus, to two classes—those who were silent about Christianity, and those who were Christians. The former would correspond to those who rejected it without examination, and the latter to those who examined it, and in consequence became Christians. We have no evidence of any third class of writers—that, is of men who examined the evidences of Christianity, and were not convinced by them. Of course there may have been such, but history knows nothing of them.

It should also be noticed that in some respects the testimony of Christian writers (*e.g.*, St. Paul) is more valuable than that of Jewish or heathen ones; for none of the writers of that century were born Christians. They were all unbelievers before they were believers; and if such testimony from unbelievers would be valuable, it is still more so from those who showed how thoroughly they were convinced of its truth by becoming believers. While, lastly, it must be remembered that the argument from silence is proverbially unsound. For instance, over two hundred and forty letters of the younger Pliny have come down to us, and in only one of these does he mention Christianity. Suppose this one had been lost, what a strong argument could have been formed against the spread of Christianity from the silence of Pliny; and yet this one letter shows its marvellous progress (see Chap. xxii.).

This objection, then, is quite insufficient to outweigh the positive testimony on the other side, and we are forced back to the conclusion that the actual occurrence of the Christian miracles was *never disputed* at the time, either by Jews or heathens. And considering their alleged publicity, this is a strong additional argument in their favour.

(4.) *Futile attempts to explain them away.*—In conclusion, we must notice certain Rationalistic explanations which have been given of the miracles. It was hardly to be expected

that, with such strong evidence in their favour, the modern opponents of Christianity would merely assert that the accounts were pure fiction from beginning to end. Attempts have of course been made to explain the miracles in such a way that, while depriving them of any supernatural character, it may yet be admitted that some such events occurred which gave rise to the Christian stories.

A few examples will show the kind of explanations given. Christ's walking on the sea is explained as His walking on a ridge of sand or rock running out just under the water, which would be invisible to the Apostles in the boat, and so He would appear to be walking on the sea. The raising of Lazarus is explained as his having been buried alive; healing the lame man at Bethesda as the skilful detection of an impostor; feeding the five thousand as nothing more than the example of Christ and His Apostles, who so freely shared their small supply with those around them that it induced others to do the same, and thus eventually every one had a little. These explanations, it will be noticed, correspond to denying the investigation or reasoning of the witnesses, and frequently their veracity also. For feeding the five thousand, as explained above, could not have developed into the story in our Gospels without intentional falsehood on the part of the writers. And if this is admitted, what need is there of any explanation at all? Moreover, when such a version was first published, would not those who knew the truth have at once contradicted it?

However, we will consider a single example in detail, and select the *raising of Lazarus*. And if we take *Rénan's* explanation of this, we shall probably have before us the best non-miraculous account that can be given of it.<sup>2</sup> Rénan, then, admits that something which was at the time regarded as a miracle occurred at Bethany; but he explains it thus. Christ's friends, he says, were very anxious that He should perform some striking miracle, or what seemed to be such, for the sake of impressing the multitude. And he then proceeds, "Perhaps Lazarus, still pale from his sickness, caused himself to be

<sup>1</sup> John 11.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Jesus," pp. 304, 305.

swathed in grave-clothes as one dead, and shut up in his family tomb," &c. In other words, Lazarus had himself buried alive, and then, when Christ was summoned and the stone rolled away, he of course came forth; and the crowd at once believed that he had risen from the dead.

Now in discussing this theory it seems hard to find words to express its great improbability. Is it likely that the simple household at Bethany should ever have thought of such an elaborate fraud? If they believed Christ capable of performing a real miracle, what need was there for a sham one? and if they did not believe it, why did they wish other people to believe it? Again, is it likely that Lazarus should have consented to sham being dead, especially when recovering from a real illness? Once more, is it likely that the fraud could have been carried out successfully at the time, and that the truth should never have leaked out afterwards, especially as the event was much talked about, and led to Christ's being apprehended?<sup>1</sup> And above all, is it likely that Christ Himself should have countenanced such a monstrous imposture?

Such a theory, then, would require the very strongest evidence to support it; but there is no evidence at all, either strong or weak. The most that can be said for it is that, according to Rénan, it is the best way of accounting for the story in our Gospel, assuming its truth to be out of the question. And the fact that he considers even this extraordinary theory *more* likely than that the whole story should be fiction, shows what overwhelming evidence there is in favour of our Gospel history.

Lastly, it must be remembered that the Christian explanation has but *one* difficulty, the antecedent or philosophical one, for all the miracles. Once admit this, and twenty miracles are no more difficult to believe than two. On the other hand, the difficulties of the Rationalistic explanations are all *cumulative*. If, for instance, the raising of Lazarus is explained by his having been buried alive, it does not help us to account for Christ walking on the sea. If this is explained by there

<sup>1</sup> John 11. 53; 12. 9.



being a ridge of sand running out under the water, it does not account for feeding the five thousand, and so on indefinitely. In short, the difficulties attending such explanations are not only great for each individual miracle, but are all cumulative ; and therefore when taken together they are quite insuperable.

(C.) THE SUBJECT OF LATER MIRACLES.

We have finally to consider two objections from the subject of later miracles. The first is from their alleged *continuance*. The Christian miracles, it is said, form an unbroken series, beginning at the time of Christ, and lasting for many centuries, including all through the Middle Ages. And it is urged that, as we have much better means of deciding on the truth or otherwise of the later than of the earlier examples, it is unfair to argue from the earlier ones. We ought rather to select some prominent examples of recent or mediæval miracles, and if we find them to be false, this discredits the whole series. If, on the other hand, we find them to be true, this raises a strong presumption in favour of the earlier ones.

In answering this objection we need not discuss the truth or otherwise of the later miracles ; for even were they all untrue, the inference against the earlier ones would not follow. With the exception of a single text,<sup>1</sup> the application of which to later times is at least doubtful, there is nothing to show that they form one series with the New Testament miracles, and much to show that they do not. As a rule, their object was different ; not being to convince unbelievers, but to gratify persons who were already Christians. And very seldom are they alleged to have been performed in public and among hostile critics. In fact, they were not evidential miracles at all. Of course there may be exceptions to this, and each case has to be judged separately by the evidence for and against it. All we would point out is, that even were the later miracles admittedly spurious, it would not tell against the New Testament ones, any more than imitation diamonds would tell against the existence of real diamonds.

<sup>1</sup> Mark 16. 17.

The other and more important objection is from their alleged *non-continuance*. Why, it is said, are there no miracles now, when they could be properly tested? If they were really employed by God as helps to the spread of His religion, why should they not have accompanied it all along, as it is said they did the Jewish religion? They are surely wanted for the support of Christianity at the present day; and if God were publicly to perform an evidential miracle every half century, all the other evidences of Christianity might be dispensed with.

The answer to this objection is that the Christian revelation does not claim to be an intermittent one like the Jewish, but a final and complete revelation, made once for all by Christ and His disciples;<sup>1</sup> and consequently that *evidential* miracles could not possibly happen now without in some measure disproving Christianity, by showing that it was not, as it claims to be, the last message from God to man.

A scientific analogy may be useful here. Suppose thirty years hence an astronomer was explaining the solar system to an ignorant man, and mentioned the transit of Venus which occurred in 1882, and which had been previously announced by astronomers as a proof that their theory was the right one. But the man answers, "Why is there no transit of Venus now, when I can see it for myself? If you predicted it, and it occurred even once during my lifetime, I would believe you; this would be really convincing evidence." And yet we know that if such an event did occur during his lifetime, though it might convince the ignorant man, it would have precisely the opposite effect on astronomers, and would show them that after all their theory was not correct, since, if correct, there could be no transit of Venus between 1882 and 2004. So with regard to the Christian miracles. According to Christianity, there is to be no fresh revelation from God to man between the establishment of the Christian Church and the second coming of Christ. Therefore the non-existence of evidential miracles

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Matt. 21. 37; Heb. 1. 2.

at the present day is what we should expect if Christianity were true, and can, of course, raise no presumption whatever as to its falsehood.

It may be replied to this that God might still work a miracle now by a human agent, who stated that it was not to authenticate anything fresh which he said himself, but merely to confirm what the Founder of Christianity had said. Of course this is possible, but such a miracle would scarcely be an evidential one at all, as defined in Chap. viii. Moreover, we have not in the whole Bible a single instance of such a miracle, *i.e.*, a miracle not to authenticate some new message from God, but one that had been delivered centuries before. On the contrary, according to the Bible, a messenger from God always brings his own credentials, even though, as in the case of a prediction, they may not be verified till years later. What then the objection really comes to is this, why should not God have adopted a different method of making known and authenticating His revelation from the one which Christians assert He did adopt?

And the answer is plain. We have no means of deciding *a priori* why God should adopt one method rather than another, or any method at all. All we can do is, if any given method is alleged to have been adopted, to see if it is a credible one, and then to examine the evidence for and against its being true. And the objection that God might have adopted some other method is of no value whatever. Moreover, in this particular case, the alleged method is a most natural one. While the Church was weak, and had to fight its way in a hostile world, it had the occasional assistance of miracles. When it became strong, they were no longer necessary, and no longer occurred. They had already done all that was required. Their object was to establish the truth of Christianity, and this is precisely what they did. The evidence they afforded was so powerful that a hostile world found it irresistible.

We may now conclude this chapter. We first showed that the miracles recorded in the New Testament were all *credible*. Of course, they are still, like all miracles, very improbable on antecedent grounds, and therefore very strong testimony is

required to vouch for them. But then, in this case, as was shown, we have testimony of exceptional, if not overwhelming, strength. In particular, the alleged *publicity* of the miracles, combined with the utter absence of any attempt at disproving them, form together a very powerful argument. And it may be noticed in passing that it is doubtful whether any other religion, except of course the Jewish, has ever claimed to have been attested by public evidential miracles. Christianity thus rests upon a unique foundation. Unlike other religions, it appealed at first not to abstract reasoning or moral consciousness, but to miraculous events, of the truth or falsehood of which others could judge. They did judge, and they were convinced.

Moreover, when the other circumstances of the Christian religion are considered, more especially its connection with the previous Jewish religion and its subsequent history, these miracles will be found to lose a good deal of their antecedent improbability. For the facts recorded in the New Testament afford the only rational explanation of all that the history of Judaism anticipates and that of Christianity presupposes. We therefore decide at present that the New Testament miracles are probably true.

## CHAPTER XX

### THAT THE JEWISH PROPHECIES CONFIRM THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

#### (A.) PROPHECIES.

The Jewish prophets foretold that the Messiah should be a conquering, a suffering, and a Divine Messiah; and these apparently conflicting ideas are all fulfilled in Christ.

#### (B.) PREDICTIONS.

List of ten important predictions; two examined in detail.

(a.) Isaiah's account of Christ's death. (1) The historical agreement and (2) the doctrinal agreement are both very striking; overwhelming probability against this being due to chance.

(b.) Daniel's account of Christ's coming. Consideration of the 'seventy weeks.' (1) The Christian interpretation has slight difficulties; but (2) the Rationalistic has far more serious ones, the chronology alone rendering it untenable.

(c.) Various objections; none of much importance.

#### (C.) CONCLUSION.

Other marks of connection between the Jewish and Christian Religions; the cumulative nature of the evidence.

WE propose to consider in this chapter the *argument from prophecy*. Now it is a remarkable and undisputed fact that for many centuries before the Christian era the Jews expected a Messiah, who should give a further revelation from God; and the Old Testament contains numerous prophecies referring to Him, which Christians assert were actually fulfilled in Christ. This argument is plainly of the utmost importance, and must therefore be discussed at some length. Fortunately it is much simplified for two reasons. The first is that the question of dates is altogether excluded. As a rule, the most important point to decide in an alleged prophecy is that it was written before its fulfilment. But here this is undisputed,

since every one admits that the whole of the Old Testament was written before the time of Christ. The second is, that the writings have been preserved by the Jews themselves, who, being adverse to the claims of Christianity, are hostile librarians, so we may be sure that not a single gloss or alteration in favour of Christianity has crept in, though we cannot, of course, be equally sure the other way. Now we will divide the evidence to be considered into the two classes of *prophecies* and *predictions*. By the former are meant, as explained in Chap. xii., any general foreshadowings of future events, which are indefinite; while by the latter are meant distinct statements of future events, which are definite.

(A.) PROPHECIES.

To begin with, it is very striking that, from the earliest times, it is foretold that one of the Jewish nation should be a blessing to all mankind. This promise is recorded and emphasised, as having been made both to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.<sup>1</sup> And as a matter of fact, Christianity was founded by a Jew, and on the whole has undoubtedly been a blessing to the human race. This is at least a remarkable coincidence; and it is to be noticed that, as we proceed in the Old Testament, the statements about this future Messiah gradually become clearer and fuller, till at last in the Prophets we find whole chapters referring to Him.

The passages which might be examined are thus very numerous, but the argument to be deduced from them is very simple. It is briefly this: the expected Messiah of the Jews was precisely such a person as the Christ of the Gospels is represented to be; and this is the more remarkable because there are three different, and to some extent contradictory, elements in His character. He was not only a great *conqueror*, who founded the most powerful religion the world has ever seen, and who has reigned over millions of men with the most absolute authority; but He was also a great *sufferer*, living a life of humility and sorrow, and dying a shameful death. And still more remarkable, He claimed (as we shall see in the next

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 22. 18; 26. 4; 28. 14.

chapter) to be not only human but *divine*; and yet these apparently diverse elements are foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and often with the utmost clearness. We will, therefore, consider the Jewish prophecies under the three heads of a conquering, a suffering, and a Divine Messiah.

And first as to a *Conquering Messiah*. Little need be said here, for that the Messiah expected by the Jews was to be a conqueror, who should in some sense restore the glory of Israel, is too plain to need quotations. Allusions to this conquering Messiah occur in the following passages among many others;<sup>1</sup> and it should be noticed that several of these passages state that the kingdom of the new Messiah was to be not only over the Jews, but over the *Gentiles* also. It was to be a kind of universal empire very similar to what the Christian Church has actually been. And that such a kingdom should have been foretold at all, especially by Jews with their rigid exclusiveness, is very remarkable. Moreover, in some places it is implied that the Messiah's reign was not to be like that of an earthly ruler, but rather a spiritual reign over willing subjects, and partly at least of a *religious* character. For such expressions as the *Law* going forth from Sion, and the *Word of the Lord* from Jerusalem, in the first of the above texts, can only mean some religious doctrine, since this is how these terms are commonly used in the Old Testament. And here again the authority of Christ over His followers, and His world-wide religion emanating from Judæa, exactly suit the prophecies.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that the prophets speak of the universality of the Messiah's kingdom, and of the rest and peace He was to bring, in a way which has not been completely fulfilled by the Christian Church. But this does not destroy the striking agreement in other places. A man's portrait may be defective in some respects, and yet we may have no doubt that it is his portrait. In the same way, the prophecies as to the Conquering Messiah and His Universal Church may seem obscure, or inapplicable in some

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 2. 2-4; 11. 1-5; 42. 1-7; 49. 6, 7; Dan. 7. 13, 14; Mal. 3; 4.

details ; and yet we may have no doubt that they refer to the events in question.

Next as to a *Suffering Messiah*. As was natural, this idea was not nearly so prominent in the Old Testament as that of a Conquering Messiah ; but it is to be found in several very remarkable passages. To begin with, some of those which describe His triumphs describe His sufferings also, and often linked together in such a way as to make it impossible to refer them to different persons. For example, to quote but one passage, "It is too light a thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the Lord, the redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers : Kings shall see and arise ; princes, and they shall worship."<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, in the well-known chapter of Isaiah (53.) the prophet describes the sufferings of the *Servant of God*, who can be none other than the future Messiah. And he distinctly refers to His violent death, which is also foretold by Daniel and Zechariah (see later on). It should also be noticed before leaving this subject that the idea of a Suffering Messiah existed among the Jews before the time of Christ. And therefore, when Christianity arose, the Founder and His disciples appealed to it at once, and with the utmost confidence, as being embodied in these prophecies, and evidently regarded the fact as indisputable.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, as to a *Divine Messiah*. This is more remarkable than any of the other prophecies, when we consider the strong Monotheism of the Jews. And yet there exist in the Old Testament certain passages which, taken in their plain literal meaning, state or imply that the future Messiah was to be not only Superhuman, but Divine. The following are three of the most important :—

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 49. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Luke 18. 31-33 ; Acts 3. 18 ; 17. 2, 3 ; 26. 23 ; 1 Cor. 15. 3.



the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”<sup>1</sup> Here we have a plain statement of the Divinity of One who should be born a child. The two words translated *Mighty God* are incapable of any other translation; and no other is suggested for them in the margin of either the Authorised or Revised Version. And the same two words occur in the next chapter, where they plainly mean *Mighty God* and nothing else.<sup>2</sup> Of course, here as elsewhere critics have tried to evade the force of the words, which have been explained parenthetically, as if Isaiah had said the Child was to be a Wonderful Counsellor; (yea, O Mighty God, He shall be) an Everlasting Father, &c.; but this is to alter the passage rather than to translate it. Equally futile is the attempt to get out of the difficulty by saying that Isaiah did not mean that the future Child really was the Mighty God, but merely that He should be falsely called so. The context shows that this is hopelessly untenable, as any one can see for himself.

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”<sup>3</sup> Here we have the prophecy of the birth of One Whose going forth in time to be a ruler in Israel is contrasted with His going forth *from of old, from everlasting*; thus teaching the Pre-existence and apparent Divinity of the Messiah, Who was to be born at Bethlehem.

“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.”<sup>4</sup> The word translated *fellow* is only found elsewhere in Leviticus, where it is used eleven times, and is usually translated *neighbour*, and always implies an equality between the two persons.<sup>5</sup> Thus God speaks of the Shepherd Who was to be slain as equal with Himself, and yet at the same time Man; and,

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 9. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 10. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Micah 5. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Zech. 13. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Lev. 6. 2; 18. 20; 19. 11, 15, 17; 24. 19; 25. 14, 15, 17.

therefore, no one but a Messiah who is both God and Man can satisfy the language.

This concludes a brief summary of the more important prophecies concerning the Messiah. Of course, there is a certain vagueness about many of them, and this is often appealed to as destroying their value. There is not, it is said, a single instance which of itself would afford more than a weak argument. But even were we to admit this, and it is certainly doubtful, it would not settle the question, for the force of these prophecies lies in their *cumulative* nature. That Rationalists should prefer to consider each singly is of course natural, just as a general would prefer to fight his opponents one regiment at a time; but it is hardly a fair method. And when we consider them together they form a very strong argument.

To put it shortly, we find that while in numerous passages in the Old Testament the future Messiah is referred to as a *Conqueror*, who should found a universal kingdom and reign gloriously over both Jews and Gentiles, yet there are others which speak of His *sufferings* and even death, and in such a way as to imply that these were in a certain sense the conditions of His victory. While there are several others which refer to the *divinity* of this Messiah, and often in close connection with His humanity and death. It is needless to point out how completely these prophecies are one and all fulfilled in the Christ of the Gospels, and how utterly impossible it is to find any other fulfilment of them.

#### (B.) PREDICTIONS.

We pass on now to the other branch of the subject. It is asserted that many of the actual events in the life of Christ are foretold in the Old Testament in the most exact manner; the following being ten of the more important groups. Others might be quoted, and have indeed their fulfilment alluded to in the New Testament; but as this is often in only a figurative sense, they have been excluded from the list.

The Messiah's nation and family (Gen. 22. 18; Deut. 18. 15; Isa. 11. 1).

The time and objects of His coming (Dan. 9. 24-27).

His being preceded by a messenger (Isa. 40. 3; Mal. 3. 1; 4. 5).

His being born at Bethlehem, and apparently of a Virgin (Mic. 5. 2; Jer. 31. 22).

His being worshipped by the Gentile Magi, who brought gold and frankincense (Isa. 60. 3-6).

His working miracles, especially the cure of the blind, deaf, lame, and dumb (Isa. 35. 5).

His being scourged and otherwise ill-treated (Isa. 50. 6).

Various incidents in His Passion are foretold in Ps. 22, such as His being crucified, i.e., His hands and feet being pierced; His feeling forsaken by God; the manner in which He was mocked by His enemies; the exact words they used; and the fact that they divided His garments, casting lots for some of them.

Other incidents in the Passion are foretold in Isa. 53, including His being rejected by the Jews; His patience under suffering; His not pleading on His trial; His dying with malefactors, and being buried with the rich.

Yet other incidents are foretold by Zechariah, including the manner in which He rode triumphantly into Jerusalem; His being sold for thirty pieces of silver; the money being brought into the treasury, and afterwards given to the potter; His side being pierced; and His being forsaken by His disciples (Zech. 9. 9; 11. 12, 13; 12. 10; 13. 6, 7).

Many of these predictions, it will be noticed, refer to mere details connected with Christ's death, and are hence often thought to be on *prima facie* grounds most improbable. But when we remember the great importance of the Atonement in Christian theology, and the fulness with which the various details are described in each of the Gospels, there is nothing surprising about it from a Christian point of view. Indeed, it is rather a sign of connection between the Old and New Testaments that they both think such details worth insisting on.

It would of course take far too long to go through the above list in detail, since, when carefully examined, many of them will be found to be far more striking and circumstantial than might be thought at first sight. And though we might just

glance at each in turn, it seems better to select two representative examples and discuss these fully. And the two we have chosen are Isaiah's account of Christ's death and Daniel's account of His coming. The former has been selected because it is considered by *Christians* to be one of the strongest; the latter for the opposite reason, because it is considered by *Rationalists* to be one of the weakest—one, that is, which they have shown most conclusively does not refer to Christ at all. In discussing these two predictions, then, we shall have, as it were, specimens of the two extremes, the strongest and the weakest; and the value of the others can be thus approximately estimated.

(a.) *Isaiah's account of Christ's death* (52. 13-53. 12).

It may be pointed out at starting that there are no variations in translation worth speaking of, and that no one denies the antiquity of the passage. Moreover, it is taken from a writing avowedly prophetic. There is scarcely any doubt that the writer thought, and intended his readers to think, that he was predicting future events. While the context shows that the *Servant of Jehovah* here spoken of, and who is alluded to at intervals all through the later chapters of Isaiah, must be the same as the expected Messiah of the other prophets. And the passage forms one complete whole, closely connected together and not mixed up with any other subject. And so in regard to its fulfilment, most of the details mentioned below occurred within a few hours. We will consider first the historical, and then the doctrinal agreement.

(1.) *The Historical Agreement*.—Subjoined is a translation, from the R.V., together with the corresponding events; the doctrinal portions being left unnoticed at present.

“Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.

Like as many were astonished at thee, (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form

The excellence of Christ's teaching and conduct is now generally admitted; while His exalted position as the object of worship by millions of men cannot be disputed.

And yet at the time of His death the cruel treatment He had received (crowning with thorns,

more than the sons of men,) so shall he sprinkle many nations ;

Kings shall shut their mouths at him : for that which had not been told them shall they see ; and that which they had not heard shall they understand.

Who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ?

For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground : he hath no form nor comeliness ; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised, and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief : and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth ; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb ; yea, he opened not his mouth.

scourging, &c.) must have terribly disfigured His face and body.

But just as men were then astonished at the greatness of His sufferings, so are they now at the greatness of His triumph, even kings are silent when contemplating such an unheard-of change.

Indeed the story of His life, which the prophet is about to declare, is so marvellous that it can scarcely be believed.

He lived at Nazareth, which the Jews always regarded as *dry ground* so far as anything good was concerned ;<sup>1</sup> and His appearance was humble and devoid of any outward splendour, such as might attract men to Him.

He was not only rejected by the Jews through life, but officially and formally so at the time of His death, when they said, *Not this man, but Barabbas* ; and His life was certainly one of sorrows.

The scourging and other ill treatment is here alluded to.

Christ, who is frequently called the Lamb of God,<sup>2</sup> not only bore His ill-treatment with the utmost patience, but refused to plead at His trial, to the utter astonishment of Pilate.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John 1. 46 ; 7. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, John 1. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 27. 14.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living? for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

And they made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death;

Although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death,

And was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

He was not killed accidentally, nor by the mob, but had a judicial trial; and was most unjustly condemned.

His being appointed to die between two robbers, and yet buried in the sepulchre of a rich man (Joseph of Arimathea), are here alluded to; though the words *grave* and *death* seem misplaced. The sense plainly requires that the death should come before the burial.

Moreover, His judge repeatedly declared that He was innocent; as did also His fellow-sufferer, the centurion, and His betrayer.<sup>1</sup>

Yet after His death He *prolonged* His days, *i.e.*, rose again from the dead.

His subsequent triumph in the Christian Church is here alluded to.

This exactly agrees with His dying a malefactor's death between two malefactors. And though His *interceding* is perhaps of general significance, it is very appropriate to His last prayer for His murderers, "Father, forgive them."

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Luke 23. 22, 41, 47; Matt. 27. 4.

It seems hardly necessary to insist on the parallelism shown above ; it is indisputable. The sufferings and the triumph of the future Redeemer are foretold with equal confidence and with equal clearness, though they might well have seemed incompatible.

(2.) *The Doctrinal Agreement.*—But the significance of the passage does not depend on these predictions alone, though they are sufficiently remarkable, but on the meaning which the writer assigns to the great tragedy. It is the Christian doctrine concerning Christ's death, not merely the events attending it, which is here insisted on. This will be best shown by adopting the previous system of parallel columns, showing in the first the chief items in the Christian doctrine, and in the other the prophet's words corresponding to them.

All mankind are sinners.

Christ alone was sinless.

He suffered not for His own sins, but for those of others. Nor was this the mere accidental suffering of an innocent man for a guilty one ; it was a great work of atonement, an offering for sin. This is the central feature of the Christian doctrine, and it is strongly emphasised in the prophecy.

And this Atonement was the fulfilment of all the old Jewish sacrifices ; so that there was a special fitness in Christ's being put to death at the time of the Jewish Passover.

"All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way."

"He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed."

"The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

"For the transgression of my people was he stricken."

"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin."

"And he shall bear their iniquities."

"He bare the sin of many."

This is shown by the sacrificial language employed throughout. In particular, the *offering for sin* is the same word as that used in Leviticus and elsewhere for the *guilt-offering* (or *trespass-offering*, A. V.).

Moreover, Christ's sacrifice was voluntary; He freely laid down His life, no one took it from Him.<sup>1</sup>

And yet it was in a certain sense God's doing, and acceptable to Him.

In consequence of this free offering of Himself, Christ founded His Church, a mighty empire, able to hold its own with the kingdoms of the world.

And His Church has been most successful in winning souls to God, which is pre-eminently what God wishes.

Moreover, Christ Himself saw these fruits of His Passion, and was satisfied with them.

Lastly, Christians are justified only by Christ's Atonement.

All this, it is plain, exactly suits the Christ of Christendom; and it is equally plain that it does not and cannot suit any one else, since many of the Christian doctrines are quite unique, and have no parallel in the Jewish or any other religion. This is indeed so striking, that if any one acquainted with

"He poured out his soul unto death." This implies that the act was voluntary, or it would be "He died," or "He was put to death." And this is rendered still clearer from the context. It was *because* He did this that He was to divide the spoil with the strong, &c. His death was thus the condition of his victory, and must clearly have been voluntary.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief."

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong."

"He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high."

"The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

"He shall see his seed."

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

The former passage might be thought to mean literal children, but the latter, which plainly refers to the same idea, expressly calls it the travail of His *soul*, not body; so that it was His spiritual children in the Christian Church which Christ was to see.

"By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: and he shall bear their iniquities."

<sup>1</sup> John 10. 18.



Christianity, but unacquainted with Isaiah, came across the passage for the first time, he would probably ascribe it to one of St. Paul's Epistles. And certain it is that every word of it might be found there with perfect fitness.

Moreover, the choice lies between the Christian interpretation and none at all. The ancient Jews interpreted the passage as referring to their future Messiah; the modern Jews explain it in a general way as referring to the past calamities and future restoration of the Jewish nation, which, they say (relying on Isa. 41. 8), is here personified as a single man. This not only leaves all the minuter details of the prophecy unexplained and inexplicable, but it ignores its very essence, which is the atoning character of the sufferings. No one can say that the sufferings of the Jews were voluntary, or that they were not for their own sins, but for those of other people, which were in consequence atoned for. Or, to put the argument in other words, if the *He* refers to the Jewish nation, to whom does the *our* refer in such sentences as *He was wounded for our transgressions*? This interpretation then is hopelessly untenable, and the passage either means what Christians assert, or it means nothing.

In conclusion, it must be again pointed out that all these minute historical details attending Christ's death, and all these remarkable Christian doctrines concerning it, are all found within fifteen verses of a writing avowedly prophetic, and written many centuries before the time of Christ. It would be hard to over-estimate the enormous improbability of all these coincidences being due to chance; indeed, such a conclusion seems incredible.

(b.) *Daniel's account of Christ's Coming* (9. 24-27).

The following is the translation from the R.V., only for greater clearness the numbers are given in figures and not in words. The most important marginal alternatives are given underneath; and as many of these are placed both in the A.V. and in the American R.V. in the text, while the others are in the margin, there can be no doubt that the Hebrew is capable of both meanings. These doubtful readings, as we shall see, do not materially affect the prediction; but they

have been the means of obscuring its force a good deal by diverting attention from the main issue.

(v. 24.) "70 weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint { the most holy. }  
{ a most holy place. }

(v. 25.) Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto { the anointed one, } the prince, shall be 7 weeks: and { Messiah, } 62 weeks, it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times.

(v. 26.) And after the 62 weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and { his end } shall be with a flood, and even unto { the end thereof } the end shall be war; desolations are determined.

(v. 27.) And he shall make a firm covenant with many for 1 week: and { for the half } of the week he shall cause { in the midst } the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the { wing } of abominations shall come one that maketh { pinnacle } desolate; and even unto the consummation, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the { desolator. } " desolate. "

Now though there are an immense variety of opinions as to the details of this passage, yet there are only two theories as to its whole scope, which we may call the Christian and the Rationalistic. According to the former, it refers to the coming of Christ, the establishment of the Christian religion, and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. According to the latter, it refers to the persecution of the Jews and the defilement of their Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, B.C. 168. And as for this and other reasons Rationalists have decided that the Book

of Daniel was written about this time, they thus get rid of any prediction whatever. Fortunately, we need not discuss its date here, since, if the passage refers to Christ, it matters little whether it was written one and a half or five and a half centuries before His time.

It must be pointed out at starting that the period alluded to cannot mean seventy ordinary weeks of *days* (i.e., 490 days, or a little over a year); for the events described, such as the rebuilding of the city, could not have occurred in this time. It seems rather to refer to weeks of *years*, especially from the similar language in Ezek. 4. 5, 6. This is admitted on both sides, so need not be further discussed. We have thus 70 weeks of years, i.e., 490 years, to account for altogether; and these commence, we are told, *from a command to rebuild Jerusalem*. Now there are but four decrees to which this could possibly refer, the dates of which, as given in the A.V., are certainly correct to within a few years. The first was in B.C. 536, when Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. The second was in B.C. 519, when Darius removed certain hindrances to its rebuilding. The third was in B.C. 457, when Artaxerxes sent Ezra to beautify the Temple, and apparently to partly rebuild the city, as he took with him several thousand persons. The fourth was in B.C. 445, when the same monarch allowed Nehemiah to rebuild, or continue rebuilding, the city.<sup>1</sup>

(1.) *The Christian interpretation.*—We will now consider the Christian interpretation in detail. And first, as to the starting-point. As this was a command to rebuild Jerusalem, and says nothing about the Temple, it probably refers to the third or fourth decree. The latter is that chosen in the margin of the A.V.; but the former, B.C. 457, is justly preferred by Pusey in his "Lectures on Daniel," as it seems to have been the first which in any way authorised the rebuilding of the city.

In v. 24 the events at the close of the 70 weeks seem

<sup>1</sup> Ezra 1. 1-3; 6. 1-12; 7. 11-27; Neh. 2. 1-8.

to imply some important religious change to be effected by the Messiah. And not only does this in general apply to Christ, but some of the items specified are precisely such as Christians believe His coming to have effected. His Atonement was a complete reconciliation for sin, He sealed up Hebrew prophecy both in the sense of fulfilling it and of ending it,<sup>1</sup> and he was anointed as the Holy One of God.

In v. 25 it is not clear what is to occur after the 7 weeks. Evidently something is meant for then, or it would read 69 weeks; and it can scarcely mean that the *Messiah* is then to come, though the modern Hebrew pointing, by putting the full stop after the 7 weeks, favours this view. But little weight can be attached to this; and it is most unlikely to have been Daniel's meaning, for it would make this Messiah to be different from the Messiah of the following verse, who is to be "cut off" *after* the 62 weeks. A more probable view is that these 7 weeks (49 years) refer to the rebuilding of the city, as the 62 weeks are again alluded to just afterwards; and if so, the *troubled times* are abundantly testified to by Ezra and Nehemiah. On the whole, then, we have 69 weeks (483 years) from the beginning till the time when the Messiah should come, and counting from B.C. 457 this gives the exact date, A.D. 27, when Christ's public ministry began. This was the time of His baptism, when, as Christians believe, He was anointed with the Holy Spirit, *i.e.*, shown to be the Messiah or Anointed One. But of course too much stress must not be placed on an exact coincidence like this, as the chronology at both ends is uncertain to within a few years.

In v. 26 the Messiah is to be *cut off*, implying a violent death, after the 62 weeks (*i.e.*, 69 from the beginning). And this seems to imply immediately after, though it may only mean some time in the 70th week; as in the next verse He seems to be alluded to as existing during that week. We then read of the destruction of the city and sanctuary by the *people* of the prince that shall come, which exactly agrees

<sup>1</sup> Acts 3. 18; Matt. 11. 13.

with the destruction under Titus, who personally tried to save the Temple. And how well the rest of the description suits the Roman siege, it is needless to point out. Not only were the city and sanctuary utterly ruined by that flood of desolation, but as a Jewish city *the end thereof* was with that flood. Against this it must be noticed that the destruction under Titus did not take place till A.D. 70, some time after the close of the 70 weeks, instead of during the last week, as is implied by Daniel. The usual Christian explanation is that it is placed here in close connection with the cutting off of the Messiah, to show the connection which really existed between those events; though it was not one of time, but rather of cause and effect. The great sin of the Jews in cutting off Christ led to the destruction of their city and Temple, though it was delayed for some years.

In v. 27 we come to the last week, which corresponds to the 7 years, A.D. 27-34. During this week the *firm covenant* of the Gospel was preached to the Jews,<sup>1</sup> first by Christ, and then by His disciples; and *many* believed on Him. In the latter year it was first preached to the Samaritans,<sup>1</sup> thus showing that the special privileges of the Jews were at an end, and closing the time of their dispensation, to which the 70 weeks referred. And *in the midst of the week* Christ caused the Jewish sacrifices to cease (as to their efficacy) by replacing them once for all by the sacrifice of Himself (A.D. 31?—the exact date of the crucifixion is not known). The last clause refers again to the destruction of the Temple, which had become a place of abomination, and marks the desolation as final and complete.

This, then, is the Christian interpretation. Some of the details are no doubt unsatisfactory, but the general agreement, more especially as to the time when the Messiah should come, and the general objects of His coming, cannot be disputed.

(2.) *The Rationalistic interpretation.*—Now for the other theory. The writer, it is supposed, lived in the time of

<sup>1</sup> Acts 8.

Antiochus, and wished to encourage his countrymen in their struggle against that monarch. He therefore pretended that there was an old prophecy that the deliverance foretold by Jeremiah as coming at the end of the 70 years' captivity, and which it is assumed (in spite of the statement in Ezra 1. 1) had not been properly fulfilled in Cyrus, really referred to a period of 70 *weeks* of years (490 years), after which there would be a complete deliverance. The 70 weeks would thus date from the beginning of the captivity (B.C. 606), and would be drawing towards their close at the time of Antiochus.

And the main argument in favour of this theory is that the last of Daniel's weeks corresponds, it is said, with the last 7 years in the reign of Antiochus (B.C. 171-164). Briefly speaking, the events were these. Antiochus succeeded to the throne of Syria in B.C. 175, and deposed the Jewish high priest, Onias III., who was murdered soon afterwards. In B.C. 170 he made his first attack on Jerusalem, plundered the Temple, and went away. This was followed by about two years' peace. Then the lasting persecution began; the Temple was desecrated, the Jewish sacrifices ceased, and an idol altar was set up outside. On the same day three years afterwards (B.C. 165), Judas Maccabæus having reconquered Jerusalem, the Temple was cleansed and the services resumed.<sup>1</sup> In the next year Antiochus died in Persia, but the war continued till B.C. 161.

According to rationalists, then, Daniel's words would mean, not 70 years, but 70 *weeks* of years are decreed to fulfil the prophecy of Jeremiah; and to anoint the most holy place, the Temple (by Judas Maccabæus). Know, therefore, that from a command to restore Jerusalem unto an anointed one, a prince (probably Cyrus), shall be 7 weeks (49 years). And during 62 weeks (434 years) the city shall be rebuilt in troublous times! And after the 62 weeks shall the anointed one (probably Onias III.) be cut off. And the people of the prince (Antiochus) that shall come shall destroy the city and sanctuary, and his end shall be with a flood. And he

<sup>1</sup> 1 Macc. 1; 4.

(Antiochus, not the Messiah) shall make a firm covenant with many for one week (B.C. 171-164). And for the latter half of this week he shall cause the sacrifices to cease (by desecrating the Temple) until wrath be poured out upon the desolator.

With regard to this theory, the most striking agreement is that the *midst of the week* exactly corresponds with the date of the desecration of the Temple, so that the three years during which the sacrifices ceased would be approximately the last half of the week. Now if this last week were fixed in any *other* way, this would be important; but it is not so. It cannot be deduced from the earlier part of the prophecy, nor is its starting-point marked by anything except the unimportant murder of Onias. And with this the force of the coincidence as to the midst of the week vanishes; for it is easy to count  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years each way from the date of the desecration, and then to look upon these as the last week. The one thing which might have fixed it definitely is the *firm covenant*. But the best explanation rationalists can find for this is that it refers to the permission Antiochus gave to some apostate Jews to adopt heathen customs; but this was at the beginning of his reign, B.C. 175, and it naturally came to an end when the war broke out.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the agreement even as to this last week is far from complete. And yet, according to rationalists, the writer was a contemporary, and was describing what occurred under his own eyes, and therefore there should be no difficulty in identifying it; while the fact that he falsely ascribed his writings to the ancient prophet Daniel would only have made him still more careful that every one should see that his pretended predictions had been verified.

On the other hand, the rationalistic interpretation has enormous difficulties. And first as to the date of beginning the 70 weeks. The above theory might indeed supply a reason for commencing them B.C. 606, had Daniel left the time of their commencement uncertain. But he has not done

<sup>1</sup> 1 Macc. 1. 10-15.

so. He distinctly says they begin from a command to restore Jerusalem, and this of itself is a disproof of any theory which would require them to begin elsewhere.

Next as to the Anointed One or Messiah. He is a central figure in the prophecy, and yet on this theory the *anointing* of v. 24 refers to the Temple; the *Anointed One* of v. 25 to Cyrus, who is no doubt called so in Isa. 45. 1; and the *Anointed One* of v. 26 to somebody else, probably Onias III., though the same Hebrew word is used throughout. This alone tells strongly against the theory.

Thirdly, neither city nor sanctuary was *destroyed* by Antiochus. The city, though partly burnt, seems to have been inhabited all the time, and, as far as we know, the Temple remained uninjured, though polluted.<sup>1</sup>

Fourthly, there is the *time* difficulty, and this alone seems insuperable. For the weeks are no mere detail of the prophecy, but its very groundwork. And there is here no uncertainty in Daniel's language, the 70 in v. 24, and its components 7, 62, and 1 in the following verses, are all plain figures; and assuming, as rationalists as well as Christians do, that these represent weeks of years, how are they to be accounted for? It is, of course, obvious that the 70 weeks (490 years) cannot be got in between even the first decree, that of Cyrus, B.C. 536, and the death of Antiochus, B.C. 164. Accordingly, in defiance of Daniel's words, an earlier starting-point has to be found; most critics, as said above, choosing B.C. 606, though some prefer B.C. 588, which was the time of Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem. But there is no pretence that at either of these dates any command went forth to rebuild the city, which is the fixed starting-point of the prophecy.

It is also obvious that either of these earlier dates is only a help to the difficulty, not its solution, as there are still some surplus years. These are generally got rid of by the strange expedient of starting the 62 weeks over again from the same date as the 7 weeks, which latter are thus supposed to run *parallel* to the others. But this makes the whole period

<sup>1</sup> 1 Macc. 1. 31, 38, 55.



to be 63 instead of 70 weeks, which cannot possibly be Daniel's meaning. For his divisions of 7, 62, and 1 must of necessity be counted consecutively, since thus, and only thus, do they make up the 70 before referred to, which they are intended to explain. (Seventy weeks are decreed. . . . Know *therefore*, &c.)

But even this is not all. For still the years do not agree; and therefore additional expedients have to be adopted, such as not counting every seventh year, or assuming the numbers to be mystic figures, or commencing the 7 weeks at B.C. 588 and the 62 weeks B.C. 606, which is the only way of making the former end with Cyrus and the latter with Antiochus. We need not discuss any of these theories in detail, since the time may be made to mean anything or nothing on such arbitrary assumptions. Moreover, there is no reason for them whatever. The numbers in Daniel are precise; his divisions of 7, 62, and 1 are peculiar; and the largest and most important of these does not in any way resemble a mystic figure. Many of the critics, it may be added, frankly admit all this, and therefore assert that Daniel was mistaken as to the time. It is, of course, always open to rationalists to get out of difficulties by imputing inaccuracy to the writer, an expedient from which Christian interpreters are debarred; but it is only an admission that the passage, as Daniel wrote it, does not admit of their interpretation.

Lastly, it should be noticed that the Jews themselves appear to have understood Daniel's words as referring not to the time of Antiochus, but to some later period; for the writings of the Maccabees at the earlier date give no hint that the Jews expected a Messiah then, while there is abundant evidence that he was expected about the time of Christ, Who Himself referred to Daniel's prophecy as future, and not past.<sup>1</sup> And this conclusion is independent of the authenticity of our Gospels, for the writers were undoubtedly Jews, and must have known the ordinary Jewish interpretation of the passage;

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Matt. 11. 3; 24. 15; John 4. 25; 10. 24.

while both Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius confirm the opinion that the Jews were expecting a deliverer then, the two former expressly declaring that this was based on certain passages in the Old Jewish Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, then, it is plain that there are insuperable difficulties in the rationalistic theory, and therefore we must decide in favour of the Christian one, for the difficulties here are only as to details, and utterly trivial compared with those on the other side. In short, taking the passage as it stands, and counting from its own starting-point, a decree to rebuild Jerusalem, the 70 weeks of years must end somewhere between A.D. 20 and 40, which is very near to the time of Christ; and the whole passage points to Him as the atoning Messiah, Whose violent death it foretells.

(c.) *Various objections.*

We must next notice four objections which have been made to the present argument; two referring to the predictions themselves, and two to their alleged fulfilments.

The first is, that in some cases, especially in Psalm 22, the passage does not refer to the Messiah at all, since the writer had evidently no thought of him when he wrote. And it is said no meaning must be assumed to exist in a *writing* which did not first exist in the *writer*; so that, if there is a correspondence, it is at most only a chance coincidence. But in answer to this it may be remarked, that if such coincidences are numerous, there is a strong probability that they are not due to chance, but to *design* somewhere. Moreover, if these prophecies do not refer to Christ, it is difficult to see what they do refer to; for we have purposely excluded from the list all those that seem to have had some other application.<sup>2</sup> Psalm 22, for instance, is quite inapplicable to David or any one else at that time, for crucifixion was not a Jewish punishment. And any such reference is rendered still more improbable, partly because the sufferer appears to have no consciousness of *sin*, and never laments his own wickedness, as the psalmists so frequently do when writing about themselves;

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, Wars, vi. 5; Tac. Hist. Bk. v. ch. 13; Sueton. Life of Vespasian, ch. i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Isa. 7. 14.

and partly because the strain suddenly changes, the sufferer is brought to honour, and his deliverance appears to be the cause of universal rejoicing. On the other hand, the psalm is applicable to Christ in a variety of details. Possibly, when David was thinking over his own troubles, he was granted a vision of the Atonement effected by his great Son ; in which case, and in which case alone, it can be reasonably accounted for.

Anyhow, this objection is intrinsically unsound. It simply begs the question as to *who* was the real writer of these ancient prophecies. Was it the human prophet, or was it God Himself Who inspired the prophet to write as he did ? In the latter case, the objection falls to the ground at once. Even in earthly matters a clerk may be employed to write a despatch which has a far deeper meaning than he understands, though, to carry on the analogy, there may be some minor mistakes, such as a wrong date, for which he alone is responsible. So in the case before us. There is no reason for thinking that the prophets either knew, or thought they knew, the whole meaning of their prophecies ; while, on the other hand, there may be some trivial mistakes in these very prophecies for which they alone are responsible. This objection, then, cannot be maintained even in regard to those cases where the prophet's meaning is doubtful ; and it does not apply at all in the vast majority of cases, where the writer was avowedly referring to the future Messiah.

The second objection is, that if the predictions really refer to Christ, why are they not plainer ? One obvious answer is that perhaps they were so originally. We have no Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament till many centuries after the time of Christ, and it does not seem impossible that in the interval the Jews may have intentionally obscured the passages a little. This is, of course, a serious charge, but it is not an altogether baseless one, as a single example will show. In Isa. 53. 8 the Septuagint translation has *stricken to death* ; the words *to death* not now occurring in the Hebrew. But that they were originally there is very probable, not only from this translation, which is much older than Christianity, but also because Origen in his controversy with the Jews

laid considerable stress on these actual words ; and yet his opponents never disputed the correctness of the reading. Moreover, Justin distinctly charges the Jews with falsifying their Scriptures, so as to prevent their Christian interpretation, though the instances he gives are very doubtful.<sup>1</sup> It is not, of course, meant that any such alterations have materially changed the passages, but merely that their application may be slightly obscured in consequence. And this is very much what we find. Some parts of a prediction are often exactly suitable to Christ, while others seem indistinct and perhaps meaningless.

But quite apart from this possible explanation, the present objection, like the previous one, is intrinsically unsound ; for we have no means of deciding what amount of clearness is to be expected in a prediction ; and it seems probable that had they been clearer, they would have prevented their own fulfilment. Had the Jews known for certain that Christ was indeed their Messiah, they could scarcely have crucified Him ; and it appears to many that the predictions are already about as clear as they could be without doing this. The important point, however, is not whether the predictions might not have been plainer, but whether they are not already too plain to be *accidental*. And if it be urged in reply that among the mass of writings contained in the Old Testament there is sure to be much that would suit any striking character, the answer is obvious. The argument can easily be put to the test, as we have in Mahomet a suitable case for comparison ; and there are scarcely any predictions applicable to him except those of a general character which would suit the founder of any religion.

The third objection is, that some of the events fulfilling the predictions never happened, such as the birth at Bethlehem. Being of obscure parents, Christ's birthplace, it is said, was unknown ; but when He asserted Himself as the Messiah, His friends gave out that He had been born at Bethlehem, so as to agree with the old prophecy ; though, as His parents lived at Nazareth, they had to invent the story about their

<sup>1</sup> Dial. ch. lxxii

going to Bethlehem, to account for this. But such an assumption destroys altogether the moral character of the Evangelists, who are represented as telling deliberate falsehoods so as to get a pretended fulfilment of an old prophecy. And the difficulty of admitting deliberate falsehood on their part has been already shown to be very great. Moreover, such explanations can only apply to a very few cases, since, as a rule, the events occurred *in public*. And the fact of these prophecies being at once appealed to in the Gospels when the events were still recent, shows that they must really have corresponded with them.

The fourth objection is, that some of the events took place simply because they were predicted, such as Christ's riding into Jerusalem. It is said that after Christ had decided to proclaim Himself as the Messiah, He would naturally act as the Messiah had been prophesied to do; and therefore, remembering this old prophecy of Zechariah, He sent for the ass and rode into Jerusalem on purpose to fulfil it. All this is of course possible, but as such explanations can only refer to a very few of the predictions they do not materially affect the argument. The actors were, as a rule, Christ's *enemies*; and it is certain that they would not have intentionally behaved so as to show that He was the Messiah. None of these objections, then, are of much importance.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, it should be noticed that though we have referred exclusively to the Jewish prophecies and predictions concerning Christ, these do not form the only connection between the two religions. On the contrary, they are connected in various other ways, and much as we should expect if both were true; the earlier revelation leading up to the later, and the later explaining and completing the earlier. A single example will show what is meant, and we select that of *sacrifice*.

Now, as said in Chap. xi, the elaborate Jewish sacrifices seem too trivial to have been ordered by God, and yet we find them in the Old Testament. The same writers who describe the Deity in the most exalted language as eternal

and omnipotent also assert that He gave the most minute directions concerning the Passover and the Day of Atonement. The difficulty of reconciling the two is undoubted, and Christianity alone has the key; for it shows that these sacrifices had a deep symbolical meaning, and were doubtless one of the means which prepared the Jewish Christians to accept the new religion. And if the doctrine of the Atonement is true, there is nothing surprising in its being thus typified centuries before. Christ, it will be remembered, claimed to be the *Fulfiller*, not only of the Prophets, but also of the *Law*.<sup>1</sup> And His followers soon understood the meaning of His claim. For though Jews themselves, and still recognising the Jewish Scriptures as divine, they willingly abandoned all this system of sacrifice in which they had been brought up. They believed that the work of their Master *fully filled up* or fully realised all these sacrifices; and therefore, having got the reality, the shadow as they called it, was no longer required.<sup>2</sup> And it need hardly be added that Christians have discovered a complete harmony between the sacrificial ritual in the Pentateuch and the atoning work of Christ, several points of which are discussed in the Epistle to the Hebrews. But we need not consider these typical sacrifices in detail, since the argument they afford is nothing like so important as the prophetic one.

With regard to the prophecies and predictions one point has yet to be noticed, which is their number and variety. As we have shown, they all seem, on historical and critical grounds, easier to admit than to deny; though if each stood alone, the great improbability of a genuine prediction might, it has been said, induce us to attempt the harder task. But they do not stand alone. They are not isolated prophecies, no mere collection of curious and disconnected coincidences. But they form one complete series, gradually becoming clearer as time went on; the earlier ones preparing for the later, and the later ones amplifying and completing the earlier. And here as elsewhere this has a double bearing on the argument.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 5. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 10. 1.

In the first place, it does not at all increase the difficulty of the *Christian* interpretation. Twenty predictions are practically no more difficult to admit than two. And the fact that they all form one complete series rather decreases the difficulty than otherwise. For just as creation by evolution seems to many to be easier to believe than creation by separate and isolated acts, so it seems to many that a complete chain of prophecy extending all through the Old Testament is easier to believe than several disconnected examples.

On the other hand, it is plain that all this increases the difficulty of the *rationalistic* interpretation enormously. For twenty predictions are far more difficult to deny than two. If one is explained as a lucky coincidence, this will not account for the next; if that is got rid of by some unnatural interpretation of the words, it will not account for the third, and so on indefinitely. Thus the difficulties of this theory are not only great in themselves, but are all cumulative; and hence together they seem insuperable. Anyhow, it is clear that these Jewish prophecies afford a strong additional argument in favour of Christianity.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THAT THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

The character of Christ can only be deduced from the New Testament, any other Christ being purely imaginary.

(A.) HIS TEACHING.

(1) Christ's moral teaching is admitted to be excellent; (2) though there are slight objections; (3) and yet He had no consciousness of sin, so must have been a perfect Man.

(B.) HIS CLAIMS.

He not only asserted that He was the Jewish Messiah, but also (1) that He was *Superhuman*—claiming to be the Ruler, Redeemer, and Final Judge of the world; (2) that He was *Divine*—claiming an Equality, a Unity, and a Pre-existence with God; (3) and this is how all His contemporaries, both friends and foes, understood Him.

(C.) THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE.

Christ cannot, therefore, have been merely a good man; He was either *God*, as He claimed to be, or else a *bad* man for making such claims. But the latter view is disproved by His Moral Character.

In this chapter we propose to consider the Character of Christ, and its bearing on the truth of Christianity. Now our knowledge of Christ's character can only be derived from the Four Gospels; indeed, a Christ with any other character assigned to him is a purely imaginary being, and might as well be called by some other name. Taking, then, the Gospels as our guide, what is the character of Christ? Obviously this can be best deduced from His own recorded *teaching* and *claims*, both of which are fortunately given at great length; so we will consider these first, and then the *great alternative* which they force upon us.



## (A.) THE TEACHING OF CHRIST.

Under this head we will first notice the admitted excellence of Christ's teaching, then three objections which are sometimes made, and lastly His unconsciousness of sin.

(1.) *Its admitted excellence.*—To begin with, the excellence of Christ's moral teaching hardly needs to be insisted on at the present day; it is practically that now acknowledged by the civilised world. Moreover, rationalists as well as Christians have exhausted language to proclaim its merits. For instance, to quote a few examples:—

“Religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ should approve our life.”—*J. S. Mill*.<sup>1</sup>

“Jesus remains to humanity an inexhaustible source of moral regenerations.” And again, “In Him is condensed all that is good and lofty in our nature.”—*E. Rénan*.<sup>2</sup>

“The teaching of Jesus, however, carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity.” And again, “He presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it, uniformly noble and consistent with his own lofty principles.”—*Author of “Supernatural Religion.”*<sup>3</sup>

“It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all

<sup>1</sup> “Nature, the Utility of Religion, and Theism,” 2nd edit., 1874, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> “Life of Jesus,” pp. 370, 375.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. ii. p. 487.

the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists."—*W. E. H. Lecky*.<sup>1</sup>

These quotations are only samples of many which might be given; but it is practically undisputed that the morality taught by Christ is the best the world has ever seen. And it is also undisputed that His life was in entire harmony with His teaching. He lived, as far as we can judge, a holy and blameless life, and His character has never been surpassed in history or fiction. He had no prototype, and has had no successor.

(2.) *Three slight objections*.—There are, however, three slight objections. The first is that Christ's teaching was not *original*; and, strictly speaking, this is perhaps true. Something similar to all His maxims has been discovered in more ancient times, either in Egypt, India, China, or elsewhere. But this hardly affects the argument. An unlearned Jew living at Nazareth cannot be supposed to have derived his teaching by careful compilation from the works of Confucius, Zoroaster, and others, while it is a vast improvement on all of them put together.

The important point is, that there was nothing among the Jews of His own time which could have produced, or even have invented, such a character. He was immeasurably better than all His contemporaries, and the attempts of some critics to show that His teaching was only a little superior to that of the Jewish Rabbis, from whom He is supposed to have learnt it, fails hopelessly. For if the teaching was so similar, why has the effect been so different? All the Rabbis put together have not exerted an influence on the world a thousandth part that of Christ. Or, as it has been happily expressed, while Christ is the Light of the world, the Rabbis are merely a rushlight, the very existence of which is unknown to all but a few scholars. Moreover, as an index to His character, which is our present subject, it is immaterial whether any of Christ's teaching was derived from others or not, for He never claimed originality.

<sup>1</sup> "History of European Morals," 3rd edit., 1877, vol. ii. p. 8.

The second objection refers to *certain portions* of Christ's teaching. For example, He advocates the non-resistance of evil, and seems to place virginity above marriage to an even exaggerated extent.<sup>1</sup> I have never seen a satisfactory explanation of the latter passage; but it is obvious on the face of it that it cannot be meant for universal application, or it would lead to the extinction of the human race. It can only be a *counsel of perfection*, similar to that of giving away the whole of one's property. Again, several of the *parables* are said to be unjust, such as that of the wedding garment, the workmen in the vineyard, and the unrighteous steward. But parables cannot be pressed literally, and the interpretation put upon these by different commentators is so various that no valid objection can be founded on them. However, we will consider the last, which is the one most often objected to.

Here it will be remembered that though the steward had been guilty of the gravest dishonesty, he was *commended* because he had done wisely.<sup>2</sup> But the idea that the parable was meant to advocate dishonesty is out of the question. Nor is the explanation hard to find. Suppose at the present day an ingenious robbery was committed, and a person said that he could not help admiring the scoundrel for his cleverness. This would not imply an approval of dishonesty, for two reasons; partly because the man was still called a scoundrel, and partly because he was not praised as a whole, but a particular part of his conduct was singled out for admiration, which was not his dishonesty but his cleverness. So in the case before us. The steward was still called *unrighteous*, and only a part of his conduct was singled out for commendation, which was not his dishonesty but his *wisdom*. The obvious meaning is that wisdom is so desirable that it is to be commended even in worldly matters, and even in a bad cause; and therefore still more to be aimed at in religious matters, and in a good cause.

The third objection is derived from *certain portions* of Christ's *conduct*, more especially his behaviour to His parents,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 5. 39; 19. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 16. 8.

to His fellow-citizens, and to the priests and rulers of His own nation.<sup>1</sup> Such conduct, it is urged, is most unbecoming. Doubtless it would be so if He were only a man, but not if He were the Divine Man He claimed to be. A single example will make this quite plain, and we select one which is often thought to present special difficulties, the *miracle at Gadara*.<sup>2</sup>

Here, it will be remembered, Christ allowed some evil spirits to destroy certain swine, without apparently any compensation being made to the owners; and, it is urged, the wilful destruction of another man's property is contrary to all our ideas of justice. Of course it is; but it is equally plain that the term 'another man's property' begs the whole question at issue. If Christ was really the Divine Being He claimed to be, the world and all it contained was His own; and His allowing the swine to be destroyed by evil spirits cannot be objected to on the ground of injustice, any more than His allowing them to die by disease or in any other manner. If, on the other hand, Christ was a mere man, no doubt His conduct would be most reprehensible; but then the whole story would be incredible. The evil spirits would not have come out of the demoniac at the word of a man, nor would they have asked his permission to go elsewhere. And therefore Christ's conduct cannot even be objected to as a bad example to others, for imitation was out of the question.

Before leaving this miracle, it may be noticed that the keeping of swine at all, considering the abhorrence in which they were held by the Jews, is often thought to be a difficulty. But we happen to know from Josephus that Gadara was one of the few Grecian cities in the country; so this is really an evidence of truthfulness.<sup>3</sup> For if the Evangelist had invented the story, it is most unlikely that he should have *unknowingly* selected a Grecian city for the miracle; and still more unlikely that he should have done so *knowingly*, and yet without giving a hint that this explained the presence of the swine, but leaving his readers to discover it for themselves from other sources. Moreover, their destruction was not a useless

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Luke 2. 49; 19. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 8. 28-34; Luke 8. 26-40.

<sup>3</sup> *Antiq.* xvii. 11.

addition to the previous miracle of healing, but was a sign which, we are told, called attention to it throughout the neighbourhood; and it doubtless helped to convince the man himself that he was permanently cured. And if it be further asked why the spirits should have wished to destroy the swine, the answer is obvious. Their doing so made the people fear similar catastrophes, and therefore they besought Christ to depart from their country, which is doubtless what the spirits intended.

This objection, then, is quite untenable, while the previous ones are only trivial and unimportant, and do not affect the main question. They are merely like spots on the sun, and probably would not be thought difficulties in any other religion. Moreover, in every case numerous other passages can be quoted which contradict any immoral inference over and over again. We therefore conclude that the morality taught by Christ is unique in its perfection; and this alone seems to many a strong argument in favour of Christianity.

(3.) *Christ's unconsciousness of sin.*—A most remarkable point has now to be noticed. It is that, notwithstanding this lofty moral ideal, there is not in the character of Christ the slightest consciousness of *sin*. In all His numerous discourses, and even in His prayers, there is not a single word which implies that He thought He ever had done, or ever could do, anything wrong Himself. He blamed self-righteousness in others, and exhorted them to repentance; but never hinted that He had any need of it Himself. And this is the more striking when we reflect that good men are, as a rule, most conscious of their faults. But yet we here find one who carried moral goodness to its utmost limit, whose precepts are admittedly perfect, and yet who never for a moment thought that He was not fulfilling them Himself. Such a character is absolutely unique in the world's history. It can only be explained by saying that Christ was not only a good man, but a *perfect* man, since goodness without perfection would only have made Him more conscious of the faults He had.

Before leaving this subject, it may be pointed out that Christ's goodness was not, as is often supposed, mere beneficence or continually doing good, in the sense of making

people happy. Doubtless He did this, but there was another side to His character. He could be just as well as merciful, severe as well as tender, and His denunciations of wickedness and hypocrisy are very striking. In short, His character exhibited a combination of beneficence and righteousness very similar to what we have before considered in this essay. So that the goodness of Christ seems to be not only perfect from a human standpoint, but from a Divine standpoint also, being precisely similar to the goodness of God Himself.

(B.) THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST.

We pass on now to the claims of Christ; and His high moral character would plainly lead us to place the utmost confidence in what He said about Himself. Unfortunately, His statements are so well known that it is hard to appreciate their real force and significance. We must try and consider what they would have sounded like, and what they would have meant, when first uttered.

To begin with, it is undisputed that Christ claimed to be the Jewish *Messiah*, with all that that position involved. Thus He claimed to work miracles, to be a lawgiver with power to revise and expand the Mosaic Law, including even the Decalogue itself,<sup>1</sup> and to be the founder of a new and universal kingdom of God. All this is undisputed, and it is doubtful whether the Jews as a nation ever objected to these claims. But, as we shall see, He claimed far more than this, for He asserted that He was both Superhuman and Divine; and this is how all His contemporaries understood Him.

(1.) *His Claim to be Superhuman.*—This is shown by three main arguments, for Christ declared that He was the Ruler, Redeemer, and final Judge of the world.

In the first place, Christ claimed to be the *Ruler* of the world; and He asserted this universal dominion in the most dogmatic terms, saying in so many words that all things had been delivered unto Him, and that He possessed all authority, both in heaven and on earth.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, this dominion was to be equally complete over the souls and affections of His

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Matt. 5. 21; 19. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 11. 27; 28. 18; Luke 10. 22.

followers. Their loyalty to Him was the one thing needful; and He claimed absolute self-surrender, even to giving up all human ties, however close. For instance, to quote but one passage, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."<sup>1</sup> And it is this claim to absolute authority which constitutes to many the irresistible charm in Christ's character. While full of gentleness, and willing even to lay down His life for others, He was yet quite conscious of His own authority, and would admit no rival. Had the former aspect of His character stood alone, we could hardly have admired Him; just as we could not admire a general who was devotedly attached to his soldiers, unless he also upheld his own authority, and allowed no insubordination on their part.

Secondly, Christ claimed to be the *Redeemer* of the world. He distinctly asserted that He came to give His life a ransom for many, and that His blood was shed for the remission of sins.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, Christ claimed to be the final *Judge* of the world. This stupendous claim alone shows that He considered Himself quite above and distinct from the rest of mankind. While they were all to be judged according to their works, He was to be the Judge Himself, coming in the clouds of heaven with thousands of angels. And His decision was to be final and without appeal, and apparently based on a man's behaviour towards Himself. And this tremendous claim, be it observed, does not depend on single texts or passages, but runs all through the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>3</sup> It is hardly credible that a mere man, however presumptuous, should ever have made such a claim as this. Can we imagine any one doing so at the present day? and what should we think of him if he did?

The above passages show clearly the Superhuman character of Christ. They are, however, just capable of an *Arian* interpretation, which is, that though Christ was far above men, and even angels, yet He was not, strictly speaking, God. But

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 10. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 20. 28; 26. 28; Mark 10. 45; 14. 24; Luke 22. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 7. 22, 23; 10. 32; 13. 40-42; 16. 27; 24. 29-31; 25. 31-46; 26. 64; and similar passages in the other Gospels.

this opinion has few supporters at the present day; and persons who now admit that Christ was Superhuman generally admit that He was Divine, which, as we shall see, He also claimed to be.

(2.) *His Claim to be Divine.*—Like the preceding, this is shown by three main arguments; for Christ declared His Equality, Unity, and Pre-existence with God.

In the first place, Christ claimed an *Equality* with God. He distinctly asserted that the same honour should be given to Himself as to God the Father; that men should believe in Him as well as in God; and that they were to be baptized into His Name, as well as into that of the Father.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Christ claimed a *Unity* with God. He did not assert that He was another God, but said distinctly that He and the Father were One; that whoever beheld Him beheld the Father; that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father; and that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him.<sup>2</sup> He also asserted that He alone possessed a complete knowledge of the Father, and that He and the Father would together dwell in the soul of man, thus making His presence co-ordinate with the presence of God.<sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, Christ claimed a *Pre-existence* with God. He asserted that He was the Bread which came down from heaven; that He came out from the Father and was come into the world; and that even before its creation He had shared God's glory.<sup>4</sup> Two other passages deserve special notice. "No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven."<sup>5</sup> The meaning of this apparent paradox is that though in His human nature Christ was then on earth, yet in His Divine nature He was omnipresent, and therefore still in heaven, as He had been before the Incarnation. "Before Abraham was, I am."<sup>6</sup> Three points have to be noticed here. First, Christ distinctly claims pre-existence to

<sup>1</sup> John 5. 23; 14. 1; Matt. 28. 19.

<sup>2</sup> John 10. 30; 12. 45; 14. 9, 10; 17. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 11. 27; John 14. 23.

<sup>4</sup> John 6. 51; 16. 28; 17. 5.

<sup>5</sup> John 3. 13.

<sup>6</sup> John 8. 58.



Abraham; secondly, He implies that this was an eternal existence, irrespective of time, since the words are not, Before Abraham was I *was*, but I *am*. While, thirdly, the use of this latter phrase, which was the solemn name God gave Himself in the Old Testament,<sup>1</sup> shows that the speaker wished to represent Himself as being God.

The above passages show plainly that Christ claimed to be *Divine*. But it is sometimes attempted to weaken their force by quoting a few others, where He appears to disclaim Divine attributes. These we will examine in Chap. xxiv.; we need not consider them here, for they do not affect our present argument. They obviously refer to Christ's human nature alone, and are merely special instances of the great difficulty involved in the union of a Divine and human nature. Such a union is, no doubt, very mysterious, though, as said in Chap. xv., man's own composite nature prevents us from thinking it incredible. But admitting this union, there is no special difficulty in the fact that Christ should sometimes speak of Himself as Divine, and sometimes as human. It is precisely what we should expect on the Christian theory, though of course on any other it introduces an element of inconsistency into His character. Anyhow it does not alter the fact that Christ did repeatedly claim to be both super-human and Divine.

(3.) *How these Claims were understood at the time.*—Only one question remains to be considered under this head: How did Christ's *contemporaries* understand His claims? Plainly the men who knew Him personally, who heard Him speak, and who even questioned Him on the subject, had the best possible means of knowing what He meant. Did they, then, think these stupendous claims were made in earnest, or did they look upon them as mere flowers of speech or Oriental modes of expression, as some modern writers have attempted to do? There can be but one answer to this question.

And first, as to *Christ's friends*. We have overwhelming evidence that after His Resurrection all the disciples and

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 3. 14.

early Christians believed their Master to be both superhuman and Divine. This is shown throughout the New Testament.

For instance, the authors of the Synoptic Gospels record His miraculous Birth, Resurrection, and Ascension, as well as His numerous miracles and other signs of Divine power. And it is worth noting that they always relate that Christ performed His miracles by His own authority, and without any reference to a higher Power; whereas the Old Testament prophets, with scarcely an exception, performed theirs by calling upon God. Take, for instance, the parallel cases of raising the widow's son.<sup>1</sup> Elijah prays earnestly that God would restore the child to life: Christ merely gives the command, *I say unto thee, Arise*. And such independent authority seems to imply His Divinity, especially when combined with the fact that He could even confer the power of working miracles on others.<sup>2</sup> And as to St. John, he asserts Christ's Divinity in so many words at the beginning of his Gospel; and he records St. Thomas as declaring this belief in equally explicit words, addressing Christ as *my Lord and my God*, which titles He fully accepted.<sup>3</sup>

Next, as to the Book of Revelation. The evidence this affords is important, because many critics who dispute the genuineness of all our Gospels, yet allow that this Book was written by St. John. And if so, it shows conclusively that one at least of Christ's intimate followers firmly believed in His Divinity. For he not only speaks of Christ as the object of universal worship both in heaven and on earth, but repeatedly describes Him as the *First and the Last*, which is the title used by God in the Old Testament, and which is plainly inapplicable to any one else. For instance, to quote but one text, "I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."<sup>4</sup>

Equally important evidence is afforded by St. Paul's Epistles.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 17. 21; Luke 7. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Matt. 10. 8; Luke 9. 1; 10. 19.

<sup>3</sup> John 1. 1; 20. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. 1. 17, 18; 2. 8; 5. 11-14; 22. 12, 13; Isa. 44. 6; 48. 12.

For though it is doubtful whether he had personally known Christ, he must have been acquainted with numbers who had. And his early conversion, about A.D. 35, together with the fact that he had previously persecuted the Church at Jerusalem, and afterwards visited some of the Apostles there, must have made him well acquainted with the Christian doctrines from the very first. And all through his Epistles he bears witness to the *superhuman* character of Christ; declaring, among other things, His sinlessness, and that He is the Ruler, Redeemer, and final Judge of the world.<sup>1</sup>

He also bears witness to His *Divine* character; for he asserts more than once that God *sent* His Son into the world, thus showing the pre-existence of Christ. And he implies the same when he says that though Christ "was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor;" the latter words referring to His condescension in becoming Man, when as God He had possessed all riches. While in other passages, taken in their plain and obvious meaning, he asserts His Divinity in so many words, saying that He is over all God blessed for ever; that He was originally in the form of God, and on an equality with God; that in Him dwells all, the fulness of the Godhead bodily; that He is our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us; and that the Psalmist prophesied of Him when he said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the above passages, many of which occur in the admittedly genuine Epistles, it is important to notice that the allusions are all incidental. St. Paul does not attempt to prove the superhuman and Divine character of Christ, but refers to it as if it were undisputed. He evidently believed it himself, and took for granted that his readers did so too. And his readers included not only his own converts at Corinth, but the converts of other Apostles, some older than himself, at Rome,<sup>3</sup> which was a Church he had not then visited; and also a strong party of opponents in Galatia, with whom he was arguing. It is clear, then, that these doctrines were not peculiar

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Rom. 14. 9; 1 Cor. 15. 3; 2 Cor. 5. 10, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 8. 3; 9. 5; 2 Cor. 8. 9; Gal. 4. 4; Phil. 2. 6; Col. 2. 9; Titus 2. 13; Heb. 1. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 16. 7.

to St. Paul, but were the common property of all Christians from the earliest times. And when combined with the previous evidence, this leaves no doubt as to how Christ's *friends* understood His claims. Whatever they may have thought of them before the Resurrection, that event convinced them that they were genuine, and they never hesitated in this belief.

But next as to *Christ's foes*. The evidence here is equally convincing. In St. John's Gospel we read that on several occasions during His life, when Christ asserted His super-human and Divine character, the Jews wanted to kill Him in consequence; often avowing their reason for doing so with the utmost frankness. "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."<sup>1</sup> And in thus doing they were only acting in accordance with their law, which expressly commanded a blasphemer to be stoned.<sup>2</sup>

In every one of these instances, it is to be noticed, Christ never repudiates the claims attributed to Him; He never modified them in any way, nor said that He had been misunderstood. In only one case did He offer any explanation whatever. He then appealed to the passage in the Old Testament, "I said, Ye are gods," and asserted that He was much better entitled to the term, since He was sent into the world by the Father, and did the works of the Father. And He then reasserted His unity with the Father, which was the very point objected to by the Jews. Is it conceivable that a man who had really been misunderstood, or who had thoughtlessly made these tremendous claims, if such a thing is possible, would not have explained himself under the circumstances?

Moreover, not only during His life did Christ make these claims to be Divine, but He persevered with them even when it brought about His death. It is undisputed that the Jews judged Him worthy of death for *blasphemy*, and for nothing else. This is the teaching not of one Gospel alone, but of each of the four.<sup>3</sup> Every biography of Christ we possess represents

<sup>1</sup> John 10. 33; see also 5. 18; 8. 59; 11. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. 24. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 26. 65; Mark 14. 64; Luke 22. 71; John 19. 7.

this as the real charge against Him ; though, of course, when tried before the Roman governor, that of disloyalty to Cæsar was brought up as well.

There is but one conclusion to be drawn from all this. It is that Christ did really claim to be both superhuman and Divine ; that He deliberately and repeatedly asserted these claims during His life ; that the hostility of the Jews was thereby aroused, who frequently wanted to kill Him ; that He never repudiated these claims, but, on the contrary, persevered with them to the end ; and that He was finally put to death in consequence.

(C.) THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE.

We pass on now to the last aspect of this momentous question, which is the *great alternative* forced upon us by combining the teaching and the claims of Christ. Before pointing out its importance, we must consider three attempts which have been made to evade the difficulty, by separating the claims from the teaching, the latter alone being usually allowed to be genuine.

The first scarcely deserves serious notice. It is based on the assumption that man's moral sense tells him what were the real words of Christ, and what were the additions and exaggerations of His followers. Christ, it is assumed, was an almost perfect man, and His followers deified Him in a pardonable enthusiasm. For example, it is said that when reading the Sermon on the Mount, we feel certain that we have here the genuine words of Christ ; no one but He could have uttered them ; but when reading the extravagant account of the Last Judgment, we feel at once that this must be due to the imagination of His followers. Again, it is said that though there is little authority for the story of Christ's conversation with the woman taken in adultery, we know instinctively that it is true ; while, on the other hand, though there is strong authority for the cursing of the barren fig-tree, we know instinctively that it is false. It is plainly unnecessary to refute an argument like this.

The next attempt to get out of the difficulty is by attributing the perfect moral teaching to the *earlier* part of Christ's

ministry, when, objectors say, He was merely a moral reformer; and the extravagant claims to the *later* part, when, they say, success and the zeal of His followers had so bewildered Him as to make Him unaccountable for His words. But, as a matter of fact, Christ's perfect moral character lasted all through His life, and was most conspicuous in His final prayer for His murderers on the cross. And His claims also extended all through His ministry, as is shown by the previous texts, many of which occur in the earlier chapters of the Gospels.

The last and most favourite objection is that the teaching of Christ occurs in the *Synoptic Gospels*, and the claims in the *Fourth*; so that if we deny the accuracy of this single Gospel, it is said, the difficulty is solved. But unfortunately for this objection, though the *Divine* claims occur chiefly in the Fourth Gospel, the *superhuman* claims are most prominent in the other three; and we have purposely chosen all the passages illustrating them from the Synoptic Gospels *alone*. And these claims are equally fatal to His moral character if only a man. For no good man, and indeed very few bad ones, could be so fearfully presumptuous as to claim to be the absolute Ruler of the world, still less to be its Redeemer, and, least of all, to be its one and only Judge hereafter. As far, then, as our present argument is concerned, the superhuman and Divine claims of Christ are of equal value; and the Synoptic Gospels, as we have seen, are saturated with the former, as well as showing traces of the latter.

All these objections, then, must be put aside, and we are forced back to the previous conclusion that the perfect moral teaching of Christ was accompanied by continual assertions of His own superhuman and Divine character. And as this is a point about which He must have known, it is clear that the statements must have been either true or intentionally false. He must, therefore, have been Divine, or else a deliberate impostor. In other words, the Christ of the Gospels—and history knows of no other—could not have been merely a good man. He was either *God* as He claimed to be, or else a *bad man* for making such claims. This is the *Great Alternative*.

Moreover, it is absolutely unique in the world's history. The founders of other religions may have had great moral virtues, and may yet have taught erroneous doctrines; but, as a rule, there is no reason for doubting their sincerity; they believed what they said. Of course there have been religious impostors also, but then their moral character was at fault. In Christ alone we have a Man whose moral character and teaching have fascinated the world for centuries; and yet Who, unless His own claims were true, must have been guilty of the grossest egotism, falsehood, and blasphemy. This is the only logical conclusion to be drawn from the facts we have been considering, and all attempts to evade it fail hopelessly.

Now what effect has this on our present inquiry as to the truth of Christianity? Plainly it affords an argument of great force in its favour. For the moral teaching of its Founder is shown to be not only the most perfect the world has ever seen, but combined with a sense of entire sinlessness which is absolutely unique among men. Both of these, moreover, are combined with claims to a superhuman and Divine character, which, unless they are correct, place their Author at the opposite extreme of the moral scale. In short, unless Christianity is true, its Founder must have been not only the very *best* of men, but also one of the very *worst*; and this is a dilemma from which there is no escape.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THAT THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY ALSO CONFIRMS ITS TRUTH

(A.) PREVIOUS PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIANITY.

Both physical, in the dispersion of the Jews ; mental, in Greek Philosophy ; and moral, in the social state of the civilised world. But this preparation could not have accounted for Christianity, nor even for its rapid spread, unless designed.

(B.) ITS EARLY TRIUMPHS.

(1.) Its enormous difficulties. (2.) Its marvellous success. (3.) The so-called natural causes of success : five are commonly alleged, but they all imply the truth of the Religion. (4.) Contrast with Mahometanism.

(C.) ITS SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

(1.) Its vitality in the past. (2.) Its effect at the present ; very beneficial. (3.) Its prospects in the future ; will probably become universal. Objection from *Rationalism* ; but this is no new difficulty, while it shows the strength of Christianity, and being destructive and not constructive, can never take its place.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

The history of Christianity appears to have been foreknown to its Founder, and affords a strong argument in favour of the Religion.

THE argument we have next to consider is that derived from the *History of Christianity*. This religion, it must be remembered, originated, spread over, and finally conquered the civilised world in an historical age. And since the fact of this conquest can neither be disputed nor ignored, it must be accounted for. As a mere historical problem it requires some solution, for an effect in history, as elsewhere, must have an adequate cause.



(A.) THE PREVIOUS PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIANITY.

In the first place, it is admitted by all that the state of the civilised world at the time when Christianity arose was to some extent favourable to its success. The world was in a certain sense *prepared* to accept Christianity ; and this is often appealed to as explaining the marvellous progress of the new religion. But, as we shall see, the explanation, even if admitted, does but imply the truth of the religion. The subject may be regarded under the three heads of physical, mental, and moral.

By *physical* preparation is meant that the actual state of the civilised world when Christianity arose was favourable to its success. There was an almost universal peace at the time, so that its missionaries had free access to every country. Moreover, the Jews, among whom Christianity arose, were then dispersed throughout the western world. And this ubiquity, combined with their large numbers and influence, made them a peculiarly appropriate means for disseminating a world-wide religion. In almost every city there was a synagogue, and here of course Christianity was first preached ; and as it was preached by Jews, it at all events obtained a hearing.

There was also a kind of intellectual or *mental* preparation in Greek philosophy. For the speculations of the Greeks as to the nature of the Deity had led them to a doctrine of a divine *Logos* (Wisdom or Word), which is not very unlike that of the Fourth Gospel. Among the Greeks this Divine *Logos* had the meaning of wisdom or intellect, rather than that of word or speech. Among the Jewish writers both ideas are to be found, the latter being the prevalent one, though, as a rule, the *Logos* seems impersonal.<sup>1</sup> In the writings of the Greek Jew Philo both ideas are, as we should expect, blended together. The *Logos* is both the wisdom of God and the word of God. He is also called the First-born, the Image of God, and the Image after which man was created ; and He is given the titles of Mediator, Advocate, and High Priest.<sup>2</sup> In consequence of this similarity some have suggested that St. John

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. 18. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xxiii. p. 262 ; but the meaning of Philo is often obscure.

borrowed his doctrine from that of Philo ; but this is scarcely tenable. For, besides minor differences, St. John's great doctrine, that of the Incarnation, or that the *Word became flesh*, is not hinted at by Philo or any other philosopher ; and this separates the two systems entirely. The Logos of Philo is a kind of intermediate Being, Who is neither God nor Man ; while the Logos of St. John is both. It seems then most improbable that St. John was indebted to any of these philosophies, though they doubtless caused the intellectual world to look more favourably on the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation.

And then as to *moral* preparation. By this is meant that the moral and religious state of society was favourable to the spread of Christianity. The old mythologies of Greece and Rome were dying out ; they failed to satisfy human nature, and men were longing for something better. They wanted, as men always will want, a religion ; but they wanted it free from the absurdities and immoralities of Pagan worship. And some of them, feeling the utter worthlessness of all existing deities, erected altars to the *unknown* God. Christianity then appeared, and was found by many to meet the demand.

The new religion, then, arose at what has been called a favourable crisis in the world's history, or, as it used to be expressed, Christ came *in the fulness of time*.<sup>1</sup> This is practically undisputed ; indeed, as said above, the opponents of Christianity appeal to it themselves as a natural way of accounting for its success. But this explanation can hardly be admitted. For, to begin with, the historical preparation in the Gentile world cannot account for Christianity itself. It was not a philosophy founded at Rome or Athens, in which case it might be said that the demand caused the supply ; but it arose as a small Jewish sect, basing its doctrines on the actual life of its Founder. Nor could this previous preparation have much aided the spread of the Religion ; for the fierce persecutions which it had to endure show that it did not obviously meet the requirements of the day. It took mankind many years to find out that Christianity was really the religion it needed.

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 4. 4.

But now suppose, for the sake of argument, that this had been otherwise, and that the world was so suited to receive Christianity as to account for its rapid spread; would the inference be against its Divine origin? Certainly not; for the agreement in this case would be far too close to be accidental. It would evidence *design*, and precisely such design as we should expect if the Religion were true. Any one who believes in the Divine government of the world would naturally expect the true Religion to be introduced at a suitable time; so that the correspondence would merely show that the God who rules in history is also the God who introduced Christianity.

(B.) THE EARLY TRIUMPHS OF CHRISTIANITY.

We pass on now from the previous preparation for Christianity to its early triumphs. And it seems hard to exaggerate either the enormous difficulties it had to overcome, or its marvellous success in overcoming them.

(1.) *Its enormous difficulties.*—In the first place, we must consider the immense difficulties of propagating such a religion as Christianity at any time. Our familiarity with the subject prevents us from fully realising this, so perhaps an analogy will help to make it clear. Suppose, then, that missionaries *now* appeared in the cities of Europe, in London and Edinburgh, for example, and preached that an obscure peasant, who had been put to death somewhere in Persia as a malefactor, had risen from the dead, and was indeed the God of heaven and earth. What chance would they have of making a single convert? And yet the enterprise of first preaching Christianity at Rome or Athens must have been very similar to this, only far more dangerous. Indeed, it is hard to over-estimate the *mental* difficulties a religion would have to contend with whose principal doctrine was that of a crucified Saviour. And be it remembered, this doctrine was never shirked by the early Christians; St. Paul preached it boldly, though candidly admitting that it was a *stumbling-block* to the Jews and *foolishness* to the Gentiles.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 1, 23.

Moreover, Christianity had many other difficulties to contend with. It was intensely *anti-Jewish* in its comprehensiveness, and abolished all their special privileges and rights. This is indeed so striking, that nothing but the firmest conviction of its truth could ever have persuaded Jews to start such a religion. It was as if a body of royal princes were to go about advocating republicanism. The Jews had hitherto believed themselves to be the one nation favoured by God, and for centuries they had looked forward to a Messiah who should restore their national glory. And yet it was Jews who now proclaimed to the world that their privileges were at an end, that their Messiah had come, and had been crucified by themselves, and that in the new religion the Gentiles were to be their equals.

It was also intensely *anti-Pagan* in its absolute claims. The heathen were no doubt willing to acknowledge numerous gods, but here was a religion which could stand no rival. Its success meant the destruction of every heathen altar, the execration of every heathen god. And it could be easily represented as *anti-Roman*. One of the charges against its Founder was that of disloyalty to Cæsar; and a similar charge was made against its preachers at Thessalonica.<sup>1</sup> While its close connection with Judaism must have still further prejudiced it in the eyes of the learned heathen, who always looked down upon that race.

Lastly, it had as great difficulties to contend with from a moral point of view. Christianity was a religion of self-denial and self-sacrifice, and such a religion does not naturally commend itself to mankind. Moreover, this aspect of the Religion was always brought prominently forward by the Apostles. A *forsaking* of sin was its moral requisite, just as a belief in Christ's *atonement* for sin was its mental requisite; and the difficulty of either alone might well have seemed insuperable.

(2.) *Its marvellous success.*—And yet, in spite of all these difficulties, Christianity prevailed. The new religion spread

<sup>1</sup> Acts 17. 7.

with marvellous rapidity. This we learn not only from Christian writers, who might be thought to exaggerate, but from impartial men such as Tacitus and the younger Pliny. The former, speaking of the persecution by Nero, says that at that time (A.D. 64) a *vast multitude* of Christians were discovered at Rome; while Pliny, one of the Roman governors in Asia Minor, complained to the Emperor Trajan that the Christians were so numerous that the temples had long been deserted, though at the time he wrote (A.D. 112) they were being frequented again. And he also bears witness to the exemplary lives of the Christians, their invincible fidelity to their religion, and the divine worship they paid to Christ.

And it should be noticed that, as the religion did not originate in either Rome or Asia Minor, Christians were presumably as numerous elsewhere. These references, then, fully bear out the accounts of the Christians themselves as to the marvellously rapid spread of their religion at first starting. Nor can it be said that this was only among the poor and ignorant; for the undisputed Epistles of St. Paul, such as that to the Romans, show that he thought his readers well educated, and quite able to follow a difficult argument.

Now what was the cause of this wonderful progress? It is easy to say what was *not* its cause. Physical force and the authority of the Government had nothing to do with it. The missionaries of Christianity did not preach sword in hand, nor were they backed up by the civil power. All they did, all they could do, was to appeal to man's reason and conscience, and this appeal was successful. And we learn from the Christians themselves (*e.g.*, in the Acts) that there were two main reasons for this. The first was the confident appeal to the facts of Christianity, such as the Resurrection of Christ, as undisputed and indisputable; and the second was the occasional aid of miracles. And the more we reflect on the subject, the more difficult it is to account for the spread of Christianity without at least one of these causes.

And this is strongly confirmed by the parallel case of missionaries in India at the present time. They have all that

the early Christians had, the same religion to preach, often the same zeal and earnestness in preaching it, and the same difficulties from ancient hostile religions to overcome; and they have much that the early Christians, as a rule, had not, such as wealth, education, and the protection and support of the Government. And yet how different is the result! The natural conclusion is that the early Christians had, as they asserted, what modern missionaries have not, some *decisive* means of proving the truth of what they preached, either by performing miracles themselves, or by appealing to those of Christ as indisputable.

It should also be remembered that the rapid spread of Christianity was not like that of a mere opinion, or system of ethics, or scientific theory. It depended entirely on certain alleged *matters of fact*, which facts were quite recent at the time of its propagation, occurred at the very place where it was first preached, and were open to the hostile criticism of an entire nation. This, it is needless to add, is without a parallel in history.

But it is said, notwithstanding this rapid progress at first, Christianity took nearly three centuries to conquer the civilised world. Undoubtedly it did, but the significance of the conquest is not diminished by this. It is rather increased when we remember that at intervals all through this period the Church suffered the fiercest persecution. That it should have survived such a fearfully prolonged struggle, and have finally conquered, does but show its inherent strength. We may look in vain for any analogy to this in the rest of history. No other religion has ever withstood such persistent attacks; no other religion has ever obtained such a complete and almost incredible triumph, the emperor of the civilised world being brought to worship One Who had been crucified as a malefactor. In short, the progress of Christianity was as unique as its origin or early propagation, and can only be adequately accounted for by its truth.

(3.) *The so-called natural causes of success.*—We must next glance at the natural causes which have been alleged as accounting for the wonderful spread of Christianity. Those

brought forward by Gibbon<sup>1</sup> are five in number; and he seems to think that, when combined, these will account for the spread of Christianity. But, in the first place, how are we to account for their *combination*? They are of the most varied character; and even assuming for the moment that they had the result claimed for them, the fact that such various causes should all unite at the same time to favour Christianity seems a coincidence far too remarkable to be accidental. Moreover, when we examine them in detail, it will be found that they one and all imply the truth of the religion.

The five causes are, first, the *intense zeal* of the early Christians. Doubtless this was a most important element in propagating the religion. But what gave them this intense zeal? What was it that made them so fearfully in earnest about their new religion, that they broke from all earthly ties, and faced a life of suffering, and a death of martyrdom in preaching it? There can be but one answer to this question. It was because they were so absolutely convinced of the truth of their religion. It was vouched for by what they considered overwhelming evidence, so they willingly risked everything for it. Their zeal, then, is but evidence for their conviction, and their conviction is but evidence for the truth of what they were convinced of; and valuable evidence too, for they plainly had much better means of knowing about it than we can possibly have.

Secondly, we have the doctrine of a *future life*, with rewards and punishments. Doubtless this also had much to do with the success of Christianity. A longing for a distinct personal immortality seems inherent in man, and the vague guesses of heathen philosophers were quite unable to satisfy this. It might be true that men should rise again, but that was all they could say. Christianity alone, resting on the actual fact of Christ's Resurrection, said it was true; so here men found the assurance they wanted. But is it likely that Christianity should have so thoroughly satisfied them in this respect had there been any real doubt as to Christ's Resurrection?

<sup>1</sup> "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," chap. xv.

Thirdly, come the *miracles* ascribed to the early Christians. Gibbon's argument here is more difficult to follow. If these miracles were actually true, of course they would have greatly assisted the new religion; but then they would have been, not a natural, but a supernatural cause of success. If, on the other hand, the miracles were false, it is hard to see how the early Christians could have helped their religion by claiming miraculous powers which they did not possess, and which their contemporaries must have known they did not possess.

Fourthly, we have the *pure morality* taught and practised by the early Christians. This had, of course, much to do with helping their religion. But again we must ask, what was it that enabled the Christians alone in that age of vice and wickedness to lead pure lives? They ascribed it themselves to the example and power of their Founder, and nothing else can really account for it. Christian morality cannot be a 'stream without a source,' and no other source can be assigned to it. But could a mere human teacher have had this more than human influence over thousands of converts, most of whom had never seen him?

Lastly, comes the *union* and *discipline* of the early Church. This may have helped Christianity in the later stages of the struggle, but could obviously have been of little use at the commencement. Moreover, why should Christians of various nations and classes have been so thoroughly united in this one matter unless they were convinced of its overwhelming importance?

On the whole, then, these so-called natural causes are only secondary causes in the strict sense of the term. They do not of themselves account for the success of Christianity; they merely point to some higher cause, which alone could make them efficacious. In short, the *truth of the religion* is what they all imply, and this alone can account for its success.

(4.) *Contrast with Mahometanism.*—And this conclusion is rendered still stronger when we contrast the spread of Christianity with that of Mahometanism. For here we have the one example history affords of the spread of a religion which can be compared with that of Christianity. For both



religions arose in an historical age, both had a single founder, both made rapid progress at first, and both are still flourishing. And yet the contrast between the two is very marked, whether we compare their method of progress, the object they aimed at, or their alleged evidence of truthfulness.

And first as to the method of progress. For thirteen years Mahomet appealed to man's reason alone without using force, and made remarkably few converts, and this notwithstanding his influential position in Mecca. After this failure of peaceful means he appealed to force, and from this time the religion spread rapidly. But its progress has no analogy whatever to that of Christianity, as the means employed were diametrically opposite. In the one case, all we have to account for is that Mahomet should be able to collect an army, that that army should conquer, and that the conquered should adopt the religion of their conquerors, about which they were often given no option. And as Mahomet's religion was free from any great mental difficulty, such as belief in the Atonement, as well as from any great moral difficulty, since he regularly appealed to the lower passions of mankind, allowing himself and his followers a plurality of wives, his success is not very surprising. In the spread of Christianity, on the other hand, no force whatever was employed, and, as we have seen, it had enormous difficulties to contend with. The contrast, then, between the two is precisely what we should expect between the natural and the supernatural spread of a religion, the one advancing by worldly power, the other in spite of it.

Moreover, the spread of Mahometanism differed from that of Christianity not only in the means, but also in the end. The object of the one was only *religious conversion*. The object of the other was this, combined with *civil conquest*; and there is scarcely an instance of a nation embracing the Mahometan religion without being first conquered by a Mahometan army. Conversion and conquest always went together, and the latter was often the more important of the two.

But an even greater contrast has still to be noticed, which alone separates the two religions entirely. Mahomet did not appeal to *evidential miracles* in support of his claims—that is,

to outward matters of fact capable of being judged of by other people. This is most remarkable, since in the Koran Mahomet not only refers to the miracles of previous prophets, including those of Christ, as authentic, but actually represents his opponents as asking for a sign, which, however, he never pretends to have given them. The obvious conclusion is that Mahomet felt, as all men must feel, the overwhelming difficulty of asserting public miracles where none occurred, and he therefore appealed to force, because he had nothing else to appeal to. And yet that the first preachers of Christianity asserted such miracles is, as we have seen, undeniable. They were not apologists for a creed, but witnesses for certain miraculous facts, such as the Resurrection, which they believed they actually saw. There is nothing corresponding to all this in regard to Mahometanism or any other religion. It may still be said that Mahometanism shows that a religion can make rapid progress without miracles. Of course it does. But it does not show that a religion which, like Christianity, claims to rest on miracles can make its way if those miracles are false.

(C.) THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

We pass on now from the early triumphs of Christianity to its subsequent history, and will consider in turn its past vitality, its present effect, and its future prospects.

(1.) *Its vitality in the past.*—To begin with, a strong argument in its favour is its vitality. It has survived in spite of external assaults and internal schisms, and its spread and continuity can only be satisfactorily accounted for by its truth. This is an argument the force of which increases as time goes on, and fresh difficulties are encountered and overcome. Of course it may be said this is merely a case of survival of the fittest, and only shows that of all early religions Christianity is the one most fitted to survive. But this is only another way of saying that it is the one most adapted to human nature, which, if true, is a strong argument in its favour.

Moreover, the social and political states of the world have changed immensely, and yet Christianity has always, so to say, kept in touch with them. It has shown itself suitable for different ages, countries, and social conditions, and, unlike

other religions, is still in sympathy with the highest forms of civilisation. In short, Christianity has kept possession of the civilised world for over fifteen centuries, and is as vigorous in its age as in its youth. Its long reign is indeed so familiar to us that there is a danger of missing its importance. Can we imagine a man *now* who should found a religion which well-nigh two thousand years hence should be still flourishing, still aggressive, and still recognising him not only as its founder but as its God? And yet this would be but a parallel case to that of Christianity. Amid all the changes in history it alone has remained unchanged, and its Founder is still worshipped by millions.

As a simple matter of history, Christ has influenced the world more than any one else before or since; and at the present day thousands of men in every country know His name, and the main outlines of His life, who have never heard of any of the other great men of antiquity. He is thus not only, as we saw in the last chapter, the *holiest* of men, but He is the *mightiest* of men also; the Man, in short, who has most influenced mankind. And yet this influence has been mental and moral, and not physical. The well-known words of Napoleon may be quoted here: "Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and I myself have founded great empires, but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him."<sup>1</sup>

But an objection has now to be considered. It is that, though Christianity has reigned so long, it has done so on condition of modifying its doctrines. In the Middle Ages, it is said, everything stated in the Bible, however supernatural, was believed to be true. By slow degrees the progress of knowledge has made it more and more difficult to maintain this view, so one after another of the Bible doctrines have been surrendered or explained away. This has been the case with Verbal Inspiration, the universality of the deluge, the antiquity of man, and many others. And it is urged this process is still

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Liddon's "Divinity of our Lord," 12th edit., p. 150. I have not verified the reference.

in operation, so we may confidently look forward to the time when the remaining doctrines will be abandoned, and everything will be explained in a natural, and not in a supernatural way.

The latter part of this objection is plainly guesswork, founded on the supposition that Christianity is not true. With regard to the former, the fact must be to a certain extent admitted. But none of the doctrines alluded to are contained in the Creeds, nor are they in any way essential to Christianity; while in some cases the meaning of the Bible is at least doubtful. The important point, however, is that all Christians in all ages have agreed on the main conclusion, which is that the religion as founded by Christ and taught by His immediate followers is true. The disputes have been merely as to whether certain individual doctrines do or do not form part of the religion; a question of some importance in itself, but not affecting the main issue. Indeed, so far from disputes among Christians, either in the past or at present, being a reason for disbelieving those doctrines on which they are all agreed, it is just the opposite. For it shows that the doctrines have not been accepted thoughtlessly as a whole, but that each has been the subject of individual investigation. And if investigators who differ on many points yet agree on these, it strengthens the evidence in their favour. This objection, then, is of little weight.

(2.) *Its effect at the present.*—In close connection with the history of Christianity comes its effect on the world. A religion which has reigned so long, and over the most civilised nations, must necessarily have had some influence for good or evil. And with regard to Christianity there can be little doubt as to the answer. The present state of the civilised world is a standing witness to its benefits. But we must examine the subject more in detail.

In the first place, it is beyond dispute that Christianity has done an immense deal of *good*. All our moral superiority to the nations of old is due almost entirely to this religion. For example, it has entirely altered the position of women, who are no longer looked down upon as they used to be. It has

also altered the position of children, who were formerly considered as property which might be disposed of at the parent's pleasure, infanticide being of course common. Again, it has changed our ideas as to the sick, a hospital being a purely Christian invention. It has also changed our ideas about work. In all the nations of antiquity, and in non-Christian countries of the present day, a workman is looked down upon. Once more, it has created a respect for human life as such, and apart from the position of the individual person, which was unknown in ancient times. In short, our acknowledgment of what are called the *rights of man* is almost entirely due to Christianity. Nor is there anything surprising in this; for the common Fatherhood of God and the common love of Christ naturally afford the strongest argument for the common rights of man. And though Christianity did not, and could not at first, suppress slavery and war, it greatly mitigated their evils from the beginning, and is slowly destroying them.

These are but samples of the effects of Christianity; and that they are really such, and are not merely due to civilisation, is shown conclusively by ancient Rome. Here civilisation was carried to a great height, and literature and the fine arts flourished; and yet all the time there were the greatest moral vices, not to mention the barbarous treatment of captives and the combats of gladiators. And though, no doubt, various causes have contributed to the improvement of mankind, the teaching of Christ has certainly been one of the most important. The obvious and public good which Christianity has done is thus indisputable.

Moreover, another, and perhaps the greater, part of its influence is of such a kind as not to appear much in history. Christianity may have promoted the happiness, increased the virtues, and lessened the vices of millions of men in their domestic lives without history recording it. Nor can it be doubted that it actually has done so from the very commencement up to the present time. For the undisputed Epistles of St. Paul show that many of his converts were reclaimed from the vilest wickedness, and he could have had no object in

saying this unless it was the case.<sup>1</sup> While as to its present effect on men's lives, some of those, like the clergy, who ought to know best, assert that it is so marked as to give them "an assurance of the divine origin of the religion which is stronger than the soundest argument."<sup>2</sup>

But it may be said, that though Christianity has done so much good, has it not also done some *harm*? Is it not accountable for the religious wars and persecutions in the Middle Ages? But with regard to the *wars*, religion was, as a rule, the excuse rather than the cause; for had Christianity never been heard of, there would doubtless have been numerous wars in the Middle Ages, as in all other ages. With regard to the *persecutions*, they must be both admitted and deplored; but is the inference to be drawn from them really against Christianity? Religious persecutions merely show the great importance men attach to religion, though this method of trying to gain converts is not only quite unlike that of the early Christians, who appealed to reason only, but is utterly indefensible on any ground. But we may ask, what religion except Christianity could have been mixed up with such persecutions, and yet have escaped the odium of mankind? Christianity has done so, because men have seen that it was not the religion itself, but its false friends who were responsible for the persecutions. The important fact is that the New Testament, unlike the Koran, does not authorise, still less command, the employment of force in gaining converts.

We now turn to another aspect of the subject. Not only has Christianity done much good in the past, but it is doing much good at the present. This also is beyond dispute; every one can verify the fact for himself. By far the greater part of all the philanthropic work for the amelioration of the masses is being done from avowedly Christian motives. Thousands of men and women spend their lives in self-sacrifice among the poor and sick solely for the sake of Christianity. Of course, it may be said that all this is folly, and that we ought to try to benefit our fellow-men for their own sake, or for the sake of the State. But

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, I Cor. 6. 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> Archbishop Sumner's "Evidences of Christianity," 1824, p. 414.

this is at least doubtful ; for we are under no obligation to befriend the sick poor as individuals, while as regards the welfare of the human species, the sooner the sick members die off the better. Anyhow, whether folly or not, the fact remains. The vast majority of those who visit the sick and poor do not do so for the sake of the State, or even mainly for the sake of the poor themselves, but from avowedly Christian motives. They believe that Christ loves these poor, and therefore they love them too, and willingly spend their lives in trying to help them.

And it is also a fact that this enormous *attractive power* which Christ exercises over the hearts of men is unique in history. Can we imagine any one spending his life in visiting the sick in some large town, and saying that he is doing it for the love of David, or of Plato, or of Mahomet ? And yet all through the civilised world thousands are doing it for the love of Christ. And this influence, be it observed, is not like that of other great men, local and temporary, but world-wide and permanent. This, of course, is but a sample of the effect of Christianity at the present day ; and few will dispute that, with trifling exceptions, it is wholly for good. In short, judged by its fruits, Christianity is a religion which might very reasonably have come from God.

Lastly, it must be remembered, that though Christianity has done so much good, it has not entirely reformed the world ; and its failure to do this, after trying for so many centuries, is thought by some to be adverse to its claims. But others think that its partial success and partial failure are just what we should expect if it were true. And what is more to the point, this seems to have been expected by the Founder Himself, for He always asserted that the good and the evil were to be mixed together until the end of the world.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, reforming this world is not the sole object of Christianity. Its chief purpose is to prepare men for another world ; and therefore, until we know the condition of its adherents in the future state, we cannot say how far it has been successful. While as to its so-called failure, this has been entirely due to

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Matt. 13. 30, 38, 47.

the inconsistency of its adherents. 'If all men were Christians, and if all Christians lived up to the religion they professed, there would be little else to complain of even in this imperfect world.'

On the whole, then, the *effect* of Christianity is distinctly in its favour. It has done much good, and will probably do more as time goes on; though it has not, and probably never will, entirely reform the world. But the good it has done is an actual fact which cannot be disputed, while the counter-argument, that it ought to have done more good, is at least open to doubt.

(3.) *Its prospects in the future.*—Lastly, the spread of Christianity seems likely to continue, and some day we may expect to see it universally professed in the world, as it is in Western Europe at the present time, though, of course, there will always be individuals who dissent from it. The reasons for this confident hope are, that, speaking broadly, Christian nations alone are extending their influence. If, as is sometimes said, Christianity only rules in three continents out of five (Europe, America, and Australia), it is equally true that the future of the world seems to depend on these continents alone.

And to this must be added the fact that Christian missions are now being revived to an enormous extent, and, though they are not always successful, yet, taken together, they secure a good many converts. And even where most unsuccessful, as among the Arabs, the failure may be due to the lukewarmness of missionaries, their injudicious methods, or their want of support; and it does not prove, as is sometimes alleged, that Christianity is unsuited to these races. While, on the other hand, the nations which have embraced Christianity are undoubtedly the most civilised, the most educated, and, one would think, the most able to judge of its truth or falsehood. Moreover, there is no other side to this argument. It is not that Christianity is being adopted in some countries and renounced in others. The gains, whether great or small, are all *net profits*. With one exception, there is not a single instance for many centuries of a nation or tribe which once



embraced Christianity changing its religion to anything else. And the exception, that of France at the time of the Revolution, strikingly proves the rule; for the change could not be maintained, and in a few years Christianity reasserted itself throughout the country.

But an important objection has now to be examined. It is said that in Christian countries an increasingly large number of men either openly reject Christianity or give it a mere nominal approval. This may be called the objection from the spread of *Rationalism*, and it is an important one, because it is an attempt to meet Christianity with its own weapons, an appeal to reason. Of course, it must be remembered that a great deal of the Agnosticism and infidelity of the present day is not caused by reasoning at all, but by the want of it. It is due now, as it was in the days of Tacitus, to *contempt prior to examination*, and it is hopeless to argue against this. For how can men be convinced of the truth of Christianity or anything else if they will not examine the evidence in its favour?

But putting aside this class, for whom the present essay is obviously not intended, there are still many men who may fairly be called Rationalists—men, that is, who have studied both sides of the subject, and whose reasoning leads them to reject Christianity. They admit that there is evidence in its favour, but they say that it is far from convincing. And it is believed by many that Rationalism is spreading at the present day, and will ultimately become common among thoughtful men. Now, of course, the whole of this essay is really an attempt to meet this objection, and to show that, when fully considered, the arguments in favour of Christianity far outweigh those against it. But three additional remarks may be made here.

The first is, that this is no *new* difficulty. Rationalism has existed ever since the Middle Ages, and was most aggressive and most confident in the last century, as a single quotation will show. Bishop Butler in the Preface to his "Analogy of Religion," 1736, says, "It has come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not

so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world." And it may be noticed in passing that much the same method is now adopted by many writers in regard to the unauthentic character of the Pentateuch and the Gospels. They do not actually discuss these books, but they bring in the fact of their being spurious incidentally, and as if it were universally admitted. Such a method of controversy is neither fair nor convincing; and it is not surprising that, though it has been in use off and on for centuries, it has done Christianity little permanent harm. And therefore, as all previous attacks have proved futile, there is no reason to believe that the present one will be more successful.

Secondly, these continued assaults on Christianity afford in one respect additional evidence in its favour; for they show, as nothing but repeated attacks could show, its *indestructibility*. Had Christianity never been assailed, its strength would never have been apparent; but now we know that, try as men will for centuries, they cannot get rid of this religion.

Lastly, it must be remembered that Rationalism is all destructive and not constructive. It can show many reasons for *not* believing in Christianity, but it can give the world nothing which can in any way take its place. It can give no satisfactory solution of the great problems of life. Why does man exist at all? Why has he got free will? What is the meaning of sin? Is there any forgiveness for sin? What is the meaning of death? Is there any life beyond death? Is there a judgment? Can we dare to face it? Shall we recognise those whom we have loved on earth? In short, what is man's destiny here and hereafter? These are the questions which always have interested, and always will interest, mankind. Rationalists may say that the Christian answer to them is incorrect; but they can offer no other which is worth a moment's consideration.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

Before concluding this chapter one other point of some importance has to be noticed. It is that the early history of Christianity, with its continual triumph amidst continual persecution, seems to have been foreknown to its Founder, as well as His own marvellous influence in the world.

These *prophecies* of Christ concerning His own religion, which sometimes occur as direct statements and sometimes as prophetic parables, are certainly very striking. We find, on the one hand, a most absolute conviction as to the continual triumph, of His Church; and on the other, an equally certain conviction as to the continual sufferings of its members.<sup>1</sup> The former statements show plainly that Christ had the most unbounded confidence in the religion He was founding. He knew that, however obscure might be its origin, it would gradually spread and spread like the leaven, till it became universal, and that its enemies would never prevail against it. The latter show as plainly that He was no mere enthusiast in the ordinary sense of the word; for what enthusiast ever encouraged his followers by assuring them of life-long persecution and the universal hatred of mankind? And yet these strange prophecies of continual success amidst continual suffering were for three centuries as strangely fulfilled.

Moreover, Christ's assertions regarding His own influence in the world are equally remarkable. We will give but two examples.<sup>2</sup> He said, *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.* He was lifted up on the cross, and, however strange we may think it, millions of men have in consequence been drawn to Him with passionate devotion. Again He said, *I am the light of the world.* And now, after eighteen centuries, both friends and foes admit that His is the teaching which has illuminated and regenerated mankind. Had Christ been a mere Jewish peasant, the utterance of such prophecies as these seems almost as incredible as their fulfilment. But what shall we say when they were both uttered and fulfilled? Have we not here a *compound* evidence in

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Matt. 13. 31-33; 16. 18; 10. 17, 22; John 15. 20.

<sup>2</sup> John 12. 32; 8. 12.

favour of Christianity, the strength of which it is hard to estimate? Nor can we get out of the difficulty by denying the authenticity of the passages; for they would be almost as remarkable if invented by an evangelist as if uttered by Christ Himself.

We may now sum up this chapter on the *History of Christianity*. We have considered the apparent preparation for this religion, its early triumphs, and its subsequent history. Each of these is, strictly speaking, unique, and each is inexplicable on purely natural grounds. But undoubtedly the most important is the marvellous success of Christianity at first, in spite of the great difficulties it had to encounter; and, as we have seen, all natural explanations of *this* fail hopelessly. The historical argument, then, does not begin with *miracles*, but ends with them; for every other explanation of the first triumph of Christianity is found to be inadequate. While, on the other hand, the establishment of the Christian religion is precisely such an event as we should expect if the miracles were true. And it need hardly be added that true miracles, not false ones, are required to bear such a superstructure. The most holy and the most powerful religion the world has ever seen cannot have been founded on falsehood or fable. In other words, if we deny that the Christian miracles occurred, and take from Christ all that is superhuman, we cannot imagine Him as the Founder of Christianity. There would be an obvious disproportion between cause and effect.

We seem thus forced to the conclusion that the only thing which can account for the history of Christianity is its *truth*. Anyhow, it is plain that its history affords a strong additional argument in its favour. And it should be noticed that the more we magnify the philosophical difficulties of Christianity, considered in Chap. xv., so much the stronger does the present argument become; for its first preachers had sufficient evidence to overcome all these difficulties.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THAT ON THE WHOLE THE OTHER EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THIS CONCLUSION

Miscellaneous arguments for and against Christianity.

(A.) CHRISTIANITY AND THE BIBLE.

The existence of slight errors in the Bible cannot be disputed ; but they are quite unimportant, since the writers make no claim to Verbal Inspiration.

(B.) CHRISTIANITY AND HUMAN NATURE.

It is adapted to human nature ; for it meets to a great extent the inherent cravings of mankind, especially in regard to sorrow and sin, death and eternity. The objection as to selfishness.

(C.) CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS.

Their comparative study ; the Krishna myth ; the Horus myth ; the uniqueness of Christianity. The objection that religion depends on race and climate.

(D.) CHRISTIANITY AND ITS EVIDENCES.

One remaining objection, Why are there so many difficulties with regard to Christianity, and no more obvious proof? considered in detail.

WE propose in this chapter to consider some of the remaining arguments for and against Christianity ; though, as we have been dealing throughout with powerful arguments on each side, it will not be necessary to examine any that are weak or doubtful. And this simplifies our inquiry a good deal ; for there seem to be only three remaining arguments of anything like sufficient importance to appreciably affect the general conclusion. These arise from the relation of Christianity to the Bible, to human nature, and to other religions ; and we will examine each in turn, and then consider one

remaining objection, which refers not to the religion itself, but to its evidences.

(A.) CHRISTIANITY AND THE BIBLE.

Now it is only natural that a book like the Bible, treating of such a variety of subjects, and scattered through so many centuries, should be liable to much criticism on the one hand, and have much to be said in its favour on the other. But only one argument seems of sufficient importance to be examined here. It is this. Many statements in the Bible, it is said, are demonstrably false, and many others probably so; and yet it is essential for the Christian religion that the whole book should be strictly true, since its authors were *inspired* by God. With regard to the former part of this objection, it has been already admitted that errors exist in both the Old and New Testaments; though it is only fair to remember that they are neither numerous, important, nor intentional, and are merely such as any good historian might make.<sup>1</sup> Still, if the latter part referring to inspiration could be maintained, such inaccuracies would form a great difficulty. But it cannot be maintained.

To prevent confusion, we must carefully distinguish between *Revelation* and *Inspiration*. By the former is meant, as said in Chap. vii., any superhuman knowledge directly imparted by God to man; and by the latter, any superhuman guidance vouchsafed to man in recording this or any other knowledge. And if such guidance extends to the very words used, thus securing the writer against any mistake, however trifling, it is called *verbal* inspiration. Is, then, such inspiration in any way essential to Christianity? Certainly not; for the three Creeds do not say a word about inspiration from beginning to end, and even the writers of the Bible themselves do not assert that they were verbally inspired, though as this latter point might be disputed, we will briefly examine it.

And first, as to the *Old Testament*. The writers, of course, claim for their revelations the authority of God Himself, but they make no claim whatever to inspiration. And in some

<sup>1</sup> Chaps. xii., xvii.

cases they rather disclaim it, for they allude to various other books as the source of their information on secular subjects, and refer to them for fuller and, we must suppose, equally accurate accounts.<sup>1</sup>

There are, however, several passages in the New Testament which might be thought to imply that the Old was verbally inspired.<sup>2</sup> Thus in one place St. Paul says that every Scripture is *inspired of God*, which might, of course, imply verbal inspiration. But it certainly need not, and it would be fully satisfied if the teaching and spirit of Scripture were Divine, without meaning its actual words, or its statements on secular subjects. Again in St. Peter we have a distinct claim to verbal inspiration, but only in regard to *prophecies*—*i.e.*, the revelations given to the prophets. And as the men themselves were often ignorant of the full import of what they said, such inspiration was plainly necessary. But to extend the word to include the whole Bible is quite inadmissible. Elsewhere we find the Psalms quoted as if they were written by God. But the argument does not depend on the individual words, but on the teaching (the distinction between the Son and the angels). And if the Psalms were written under God's direction, their teaching would be His teaching, and they might be thus quoted without meaning that the literal words were inspired. And much the same may be said as to Heb. 3. 7, though the inference here is more in favour of verbal inspiration.

There are also three other passages where such emphasis is laid on particular words in the Old Testament as seems to imply that they were verbally inspired.<sup>3</sup> But in each case the reference is to God's words reported in the Old Testament. And hence, if accurately reported, which they might be, and which, considering their importance, they probably would be, quite apart from inspiration, they were well worthy of this stress. And it should be noticed the name *word of God* is not applied

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Josh. 10. 13 ; 2 Sam. 1. 18 ; 1 Chron. 29. 29 ; 2 Chron. 9. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, 2 Tim. 3. 16 ; 2 Peter 1. 21 ; Heb. 1. 5-12.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 22. 32 ; Gal. 3. 16 ; Heb. 12. 26.

in the New Testament, as it is by modern writers, to Scripture as such, but only to those portions of the Old Testament which actually were God's words.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, as to the *New Testament*. We must, as before, set aside all passages referring exclusively to revelations. And when this is done, though there remains abundant evidence that the writers set forth their teaching as Divine, in only one passage does it seem to include the literal words used. This is where St. Paul says that he speaks "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth."<sup>2</sup> Here of course *words* may mean the literal nouns and particles, but it may only mean the form and manner of speaking. And the latter seems the more probable from its use elsewhere in this argument, where we find the *word of the cross*, which plainly means the doctrine of the cross, not the actual noun.<sup>3</sup> Two other texts are sometimes quoted as promising verbal inspiration.<sup>4</sup> But the former refers to a spoken defence before hostile tribunals, and not to writings at all; while the latter is at least satisfied if the Apostles were so reminded of what Christ said as to set forth His teaching aright, without necessarily remembering the exact words He used on every occasion.

Against these texts must be set various *counter-arguments*. For example, the New Testament writers almost always quote the Old Testament inaccurately, and hence could hardly have thought it verbally inspired. While as to themselves, they not only appeal to their human knowledge as eye-witnesses as a reason for believing them, and speak of their writings as their own, but in some cases even apologise for their boldness in writing.<sup>5</sup> And all this would be most misleading if what they wrote was verbally inspired by God, and they were merely His amanuenses. There are also two passages which call for special notice.<sup>6</sup> In the former, St. Paul is speaking of the persons he had baptized, and is evidently trusting to his memory only, since he first makes a mistake, then corrects it, and lastly says

<sup>1</sup> Mark 7. 13; Rom. 3. 2.      <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 2. 13.      <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 1. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 10. 19; John 14. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 15. 15; Heb. 13. 22.      <sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. 1. 14-16; 2 Cor. 11. 17.



he is not sure whether even now he may not be in error. In the latter, the same Apostle declares that he is speaking "not after the Lord, but as in foolishness;" so here also he must have been uninspired. And though this passage seems to imply inspiration of some kind elsewhere, it certainly need not be verbal inspiration. For St. Paul does not assert that he is here speaking *as a man*, but repeatedly says that he is speaking *as a fool*; the opposite to which would be that what he said elsewhere was wise and right, not that it was verbally inspired.

From all this it is obvious that, while the Biblical writers claim Divine authority for their religious teaching, they do not claim in all other matters to be inspired. Nor can such inspiration be thought probable from the nature of the case. No doubt it seems likely that if God gave a revelation to certain men for them to transmit to others, He would have ensured their doing this accurately; but to extend this inference to all other matters which might be combined with the account of the revelation is quite unwarranted. Moreover, if strict verbal accuracy was required, the copyists as well as the original writers would have had to be inspired, or it would soon have been lost.

Hence we conclude that, if slight historical or other errors exist in the Bible, it is no valid argument against Christianity. The book, like many others, may be substantially true without being infallible. It is not, of course, meant that the Bible is not inspired at all. The Church has always believed it to be so, and there are strong reasons for this belief. But the question is one for Christians only, it does not concern unbelievers in Christianity, and is neither essential to the Religion nor to its proofs. If the Bible is as trustworthy a record of the facts it relates as any ordinary history of England, that is sufficient, indeed far more than sufficient, to prove Christianity without any inspiration at all.

(B.) CHRISTIANITY AND HUMAN NATURE.

We pass on now to a more important subject, which is the *adaptation* of Christianity to human nature. To begin with, it is undeniable that Christianity appeals very strongly to some at least among every class of men. The poor value it as much as

the world and the progress of truth is the learned; children  
 are the most ignorant and most ignorant can do no more. And  
 this is the only way in the present time, but it has been  
 the history of the Christian Church if society for eighteen  
 centuries.

Now when we inquire into the reason of this powerful hold  
 which Christianity has on so many minds, we find it is because  
 it meets every human want in human nature. Many of  
 these wants are man's belief in justice, and if justice, which  
 is the basis of the law, is not in the world hereafter, as  
 we have no hope and no security beyond hereafter, as  
 well as a sound basis on which to rest the distinction between  
 right and wrong. But man's nature is very complex, and has  
 many other wants besides these. We will number four points only,  
 which are of great importance, and which are faced: they are  
 the want of a future life, the want of a God, the want of  
 a rational principle, and the want of a religion. And while Rationalism  
 leaves the first three unmet, and mere Theism leaves  
 the last unmet, Christianity meets the needs of mankind  
 in every respect. It is the only religion that we are now assuming that  
 is not a mere theory, but that we are now assuming that  
 it is the only one that is not a mere theory, but that we are now assuming that  
 it is the only one that is not a mere theory, but that we are now assuming that

that is in this life  
 of sorrow and suffering; and it  
 that we may insatiably long  
 with him and help him.  
 And though a  
 fellow-men can  
 In Christ alone we  
 find human nature: for  
 and being  
 Christianity supplies a uni-

versal want. Of course, the doctrine of the *Incarnation* also satisfies mankind in other respects, especially in presenting him with a worthy Object for his affections, and with a perfect Example; but these points have been already touched upon in Chap. xv.

And next, as to *Sin*. Here again the facts are practically undisputed. Man's sense of sin is universal, so also is his belief in the justice of God; and therefore in all ages man has longed for some means of propitiating the Deity. The widespread custom of sacrifice is a conclusive proof of this. It shows both man's inherent sense of guilt and also his inherent sense of the need of expiation. And yet, wherever Christianity has been accepted, such sacrifices have been abandoned. It is scarcely necessary to point out the reason for this. The Christian doctrine of the *Atonement* entirely satisfies these cravings of mankind. It admits the fact of sin; it provides a sufficient Sacrifice for sin, which man could never provide of himself, and it thus assures him of complete forgiveness. And yet, as was shown in Chap. xv., it does all this without in any way minimising the guilt of sin, or allowing man to sin on with impunity, but rather by magnifying it to an extent which no other religion has done, since it shows that it required an Infinite Sacrifice, that of God Himself, to ensure its forgiveness. Moreover, Christianity shows that sin is not a necessity in human nature; for it alone of all religions can point to One Who, though tempted as we are, was yet without sin. And Christians assert, and they surely ought to know best, that this example of Christ is a strong factor in enabling them to resist sin.

Next, as to *Death*. Here again the facts are undisputed. Few persons like to contemplate their own death, and yet it is the one event to which they may look forward with certainty. But to any one who believes in a future life, death is but the *shadow of death*, a transition from one form of life to another, which is probably a better one. Of course, many religions have recognised this longing for immortality, and have attempted to satisfy it in one form or another, but only with partial success. The higher nature of man revolts against any mere *material* or

sensual heaven such as Mahomet imagined, a sort of continuation of the so-called pleasures of this life without its pains. On the other hand, a purely *spiritual* heaven does not satisfy mankind either; for a man longs to know that he will be able to recognise again those whom he has loved on earth; and there must always be some doubt as to recognising disembodied spirits. And here again the Christian doctrine of the *Resurrection of the Body* alone satisfies the cravings of mankind; for all doubt is now at an end. The risen body will define and localise man's spirit then, just as the natural body does now; and though there will be a great change, it will not prevent recognition. Even the Apostles, though unprepared for it, and though themselves unaware of what a risen body was like, were soon able to recognise Christ after His Resurrection.

And lastly, as to *Eternity*. Christianity, it is true, can say little here, but that little is full of hope. It opens up boundless possibilities, far more than any form of mere Theism. For by the Incarnation human nature has been united to the Divine, and thus raised to a position second only to that of God Himself. No destiny, then, that can be imagined is too great for man. Created or evolved (it matters not which) in the image of the Triune God, with a supernatural freedom of choice, his nature united to God's by the Incarnation, his sins forgiven through the Atonement, his body purified and spiritualised at its Resurrection—surely the end of all this cannot be any mere monotonous existence, but rather one of ceaseless joy and activity. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard' what those joys are, but doubtless they will be as far above anything that we can imagine as the life of a butterfly is above the imagination of a chrysalis.

Now the conclusion to be drawn from the preceding argument is quite plain. Christianity is so adapted to man's nature that it probably came from the Author of man's nature; just as if a complicated key fits a complicated lock, it was probably made by the locksmith. Or, to put the same conclusion in other words, Christ satisfies the whole soul of man because He is its Creator. And considering that Christianity claims to be meant for all mankind, and that the vast majority of men have neither

time nor ability to investigate its proofs, its thus appealing direct to the human soul is certainly a strong argument in its favour ; though, like all arguments depending on a man's own consciousness, it is not well suited for controversy. Suffice it to say, that many men, who are quite able to appreciate the force of *other* arguments in favour of Christianity, such as we have examined in this essay, yet assert that to them this is an even stronger proof.

But we must now consider an objection. It is, that Christianity is really a *selfish* religion, looking only for future rewards, and teaching men to follow virtue, not for virtue's sake, but solely with a view to their own advantage here or hereafter. But this is an entire mistake, though a very common one. The Christian's motive, in endeavouring to lead such a life as God wishes him to lead, is simply *love*. He has, as already said, an overwhelming sense of God's love to him. And though, doubtless, leading a good life may bring with it future reward, yet, were it done with this object alone, even this is uncertain. A human analogy may be useful here. Take the case of a young child endeavouring to please his parents simply because he loves them. It would be unjust to call this selfishness, though it may be quite true that the parents would do much for the child later on in life, which they would not have done had the child never shown them any affection. But, to carry on the analogy, suppose the child pretended to love his parents merely for the sake of getting more favours from them, and the parents knew this ; it is at least doubtful whether he would succeed. So again, to take another instance, honesty is proverbially the best policy ; but it would be unfair to say that every honest man is merely seeking his own advantage by his honesty. And the same principle applies in regard to Christianity.

The fact is, that having regard to one's own advantage need not be *selfishness* at all, in the objectionable meaning of the term. For instance, if a young man puts aside a certain amount of his earnings for his old age, when he will be unable to work, though he may do this expressly for his own benefit, it is scarcely selfishness. It would be better described as thrift,

and is worthy of all praise. Again, for a man to strive to subdue his evil passions is certainly not selfishness, though it is equally certain that it will be to his own advantage. Selfishness is having regard to one's own advantage at the expense of that of other people. But any idea of this kind is quite inapplicable to a Christian's striving after his own salvation.

Next, it must be noticed that this common term *salvation* means being saved not only, or chiefly, from punishment, but from the cause of this, which is sin. For sin is in some respects as much like a disease to be cured as a crime to be punished. And sin, it will be remembered, is by its very definition what God dislikes (see Chap. v.). Hence for a Christian to strive after his own salvation, *i.e.*, to be free from sin, is merely to strive to lead such a life here and hereafter as his Creator wishes him to lead. And what more worthy motive can be suggested than this?

Still, it may be urged, is not the hope of future reward meant to influence men at all? No doubt it is to some extent. But what then? Hope, however we may explain it, is a powerful fact in human nature, and therefore Christianity, by partly appealing to this motive, does but show how fully adapted it is to human nature. It provides the highest motive of *love* for those able to appreciate it; the lower motive of *hope* of future reward for the many who would not be reached by the former; and, it may be added, the still lower motive of *fear* of future punishment for those who could not be otherwise influenced. This objection, then, as to selfishness is quite untenable.

#### (C.) CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS.

We have next to consider the relation in which Christianity stands to other religions. To begin with, an argument said to be adverse to Christianity is derived from their *comparative study*. In far more ancient religions, it is alleged, we find similar doctrines to those of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. These are, in fact, mere revivals of doctrines once common in various countries; and this is fatal to the claim of Christianity to be the one and only true Religion.

But as to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, it is really unique. Many other religions had three gods, a kind of triad; but this

was merely a form of Polytheism. And though these gods were often addressed indiscriminately by the same titles, there does not appear to be anything resembling the philosophical idea of the Triune God.

Next, as to the Christian doctrine of the *Incarnation*. This is said to resemble similar doctrines of other ancient religions, more especially the incarnation of *Krishna*, since in this case, besides the main fact of Krishna being believed to be an incarnation of the supreme god Vishnu, we have a close similarity of name; while Krishna is also recorded to have worked various miracles similar to those of Christ, and to have claimed an equally absolute devotion from his followers. In arguing from these resemblances, however, it must be remembered that many critics place the Bhagavad Gita, in which these legends are chiefly found, some centuries later than the Christian era; and considering the early spread of Christianity in India, they may very likely be distorted versions of the Gospel story which became associated with Krishna.

But even admitting, for the sake of argument, that these legends are earlier than Christianity, it seems almost impossible for them to have influenced it. Not only is there the geographical difficulty—India being many hundreds of miles from Palestine, and with little communication between them—but there is a still greater moral difficulty. For the miracles and occasional lofty teaching of Krishna are associated all along with the vilest moral character. In the Gospels, on the other hand, they occur among suitable antecedents and suitable consequents; they form, it has been said, perfect parts of a perfect whole. A single example will illustrate this difference. In the Purana, Krishna is related to have healed a deformed woman, almost identical with the story in Luke 13. But it is added he made her beautiful as well as whole, and subsequently spent the night with her in immorality. Few will contend that this was the origin of the Gospel story; and it is but one instance out of many.<sup>1</sup>

Any resemblance, then, there may be between the Incarnation

<sup>1</sup> "Transactions of Victoria Institute," vol. xxi. p. 169.

of Krishna and that of Christ cannot be due to Christianity having borrowed from the earlier religion. A far better explanation is to be found in the fact that man has almost always believed that God takes an interest in his welfare. And this inherent belief has led him to imagine an incarnation, attended of course by various miracles of healing, though often mixed up with immoral ideas, from which the Christian doctrine is entirely free.

Lastly, as to the doctrine of the *Atonement*, especially the mediatorial character of Christ. This also is said to resemble far more ancient legends. Thus in Babylonia there was the supreme god Ea and his son Marduk, who was the mediator between sinful man and the supreme god, and to whom men offered their prayers, which he presented to his father. But perhaps the most striking resemblance is with the *Horus* myth of ancient Egypt, which is admittedly many centuries older than Christianity.

Now, although the Horus doctrine, like most others in the Egyptian religion, is extremely confused, the leading idea seems to be that Horus was the only son of the supreme god Osiris, and came on earth long ago, before the time of man, to avenge his father, who had been slain by the Evil One. Horus thus became, as it were, the champion of right against wrong, and nothing but lofty and noble actions are ascribed to him. With regard to mankind, Horus became their deliverer and justifier. The soul after death was imagined to pass through a sort of Purgatory, where various dangers were overcome by the help of Horus, and finally, when judged before Osiris, he interceded for the faithful soul and ensured its salvation. And what makes the resemblance to Christianity all the more striking are the titles ascribed to Horus. Thus he is called the *Only Begotten Son of God*, the *Son of the Eternal Father* (Osiris), the *Word of God*, and the *Son of a Virgin* (Isis). But the titles of Horus are almost infinite in number, and very contradictory, and therefore, while some of them bear such a striking resemblance to those of Christ, others do not. Thus, in addition to being called the son of Osiris and of Isis, he is also called the son of Tum, of Ra, of Harcuti, and of Nu. Moreover, his remarkable titles are also applied to the other gods.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Transactions of Victoria Institute," vol. xii. pp. 50, 52.



But still this does not affect the mediatorial character of Horus, which undoubtedly bears a strong resemblance to that of Christ. But what is the cause of this similarity? Not surely that the Christian doctrine was founded on that of Horus. The whole origin of Christianity negatives such a view. As in the previous case, there is another and far better solution. For what was the origin of the Egyptian doctrine itself? It was simply this. The ancient Egyptians were deeply impressed with a sense of the *justice* of God; the *immortality* of man; his *responsibility*, involving a future judgment; and his *sinfulness*, which naturally led him to long for some mediator with the just Judge he would have to face hereafter. Given these four ideas—and they are all rudimentary principles of Natural Theology—and Horus was merely an imaginary being, whom the Egyptians invented to satisfy them. And therefore, if these ideas are true, and if Christianity is the true religion which really does satisfy them, that Horus should to some extent resemble Christ was inevitable. The Horus myth, then, does but prove how deeply rooted in the human mind is the idea of mediation; and this is confirmed by the almost universal custom in every religion of having a priesthood.

And if we go further back still, and ask what is the cause of this, there can be but one answer. It rested on human experience. There would have been no legendary deliverers had there been no real deliverers. Is it unnatural, then, that when the great Mediator and Deliverer appears, His work should bear some resemblance to earthly mediation and deliverance? Is it not rather the glory of the Christian doctrine that the highest previous types of noble self-sacrifice seem but its foreshadowings? Men might of course have been forgiven without a mediator, but forgiveness by intervention seems more like the truth to them. Indeed, how else can we account for the mediation of Horus retaining its hold on the Egyptian mind for so many centuries?

Now what general conclusion can be drawn from all this, even admitting the correspondence between Christianity and more ancient religions to be as great as is alleged? It is scarcely conceivable that the early Christians founded their

Religion upon a careful piecing together of various fables from India, Egypt, and elsewhere. Indeed, to select the good from these ancient religions, and mould it into one complete whole, would be a difficult task for a modern university, and was quite beyond the power of Galilean fishermen. And it must be remembered that the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement were not slowly evolved, but were essential features in Christianity from the very first. They are both strongly emphasised in the admittedly genuine Epistles of St. Paul. These earlier fables, then, can only be looked upon as accidental or designed foreshadowings of Christianity. In the former case, they prove nothing either way; in the latter, they afford additional evidence in its favour; for then we see that 'previous religions, like previous philosophies, were merely a preparation for the Gospel.'

Moreover, while admitting these resemblances, we must not forget the *uniqueness* of Christianity. For it alone of all religions seems to offer anything like an adequate solution of the great problems of life, such as we glanced at in the last chapter (p. 446). That Christianity does not fully account for all these phenomena may be admitted, but it accounts for many of them, and shows that they may all have a satisfactory solution. And it should be noticed these are questions which have always interested mankind, and all religions have tried to solve them, and yet the only solution worth considering is that of Christianity.

We have still one other objection to consider under this head. It is said that religion, after all, is merely a matter of *race* and *climate*, just as the colour of one's skin; and that the most ardent advocate of Christianity, had he been born in Turkey or Tibet, would be just as convinced of Mahometanism or Buddhism. And therefore, it is urged, all religions are equally true or false. But the fallacy of this objection is obvious, for it applies equally to other subjects. Take astronomy, for instance. A man living in Europe is convinced that the earth goes round the sun; but had he lived in Tibet, he might be equally convinced that the sun goes round the earth; and had he lived elsewhere, that the sun was a living being which had

to be worshipped. But this does not show that all these theories are equally true or false. The European astronomer is convinced, and rightly so, that his theory is the only true one, and confidently looks forward to the time when it will be universally accepted. In the same way, the Christian is convinced that his Religion is the only true one, and, as shown in the last chapter, confidently looks forward to the time when it will be the only one recognised.

Moreover, this objection does not account for the founding of a religion at all. When Christianity was first preached, it was not a matter of race and climate for men to accept it; and even now it is only partly true. No doubt a man who has been brought up a Christian does believe it at first because he is told to; but it is the same with regard to other kinds of knowledge. In science, for instance, a man has often to take its principles on trust to start with, and then by gradually applying them to various phenomena, he arrives at an independent conviction of their truth. And so in regard to Christianity. Its doctrines are first received on authority; then comes the period of *experience*, when they are found to explain the various phenomena of life; and lastly comes the rational conviction. Take as a simple example the subject of prayer. Probably most men who believe in the efficacy of prayer did so at first because they were taught it. Then came the period of experience, when they found that, as a matter of fact, their prayers were answered; and lastly, the rational conviction. And it is the same with other subjects. This objection, then, is quite untenable.

On the whole, then, it is evident that the *comparative study* of religions, so far from being adverse to Christianity, is distinctly in its favour; for it shows, as nothing but a comparative study could show, its striking superiority. Human nature is always the same, and in so far as other religions have satisfied human nature, other religions have resembled Christianity; while, on the other hand, Christianity differs from them in being free from their various absurdities and contradictions, as well as from their tendency to degenerate, and having instead a moral character of admitted excellence, and powerful

evidence by which to establish its actual truth. In short, other religions are all *human*, and therefore, as man himself is a mixture of good and evil, they contain some good and some evil. But Christianity is *superhuman*, and therefore contains all the good they do, with much more besides, and with none of their evil.

(D.) CHRISTIANITY AND ITS EVIDENCES.

One remaining objection has to be considered, which concerns not so much Christianity itself as its *evidences*. As we have seen, there are numerous arguments for and against the Religion, some of them of great complexity; and it may be said, does not this very fact of itself form a difficulty? Can an ordinary man be expected to ponder over arguments, objections, and counter-arguments by the dozen, even supposing the balance of probability to be in favour of the Religion? Surely, if Christianity were true, and God wished men to believe it, there would not be so many difficulties connected with it. He would have provided an easier way of proving it than this; or, at all events, if this elaborate argument were gone into, the inference in its favour would be simply overwhelming. This is a difficulty felt perhaps by some who have read the present essay thus far; fortunately it can be answered satisfactorily.

And first, as to there being so many difficulties. Several of these are simply due to the evidence in favour of Christianity being so strong. For example, if we had only one Gospel instead of four, the difficulties caused by the discrepancies between them would disappear, but the argument in favour of Christianity would not be strengthened in consequence. But still, putting aside these, it must be admitted that there are many difficulties connected with the Religion. But what is the cause of this? It is the very magnitude of the Christian Religion which opens the way for so many attacks. A religion which claims to be the only true one in the world; to have been founded by God Himself; to have been prepared for by prophecies and introduced by miracles; to be the pivot on which history turns—all previous history leading up to it, and all subsequent history being moulded by it; to be suitable for all ages and countries; to hold the key to all mental and moral problems;

to be man's guide and comfort in this life, and his only hope for the next;—such a religion is necessarily assailable at a great many points. But provided all these assaults can be repelled, provided this long *frontier-line*, so to speak, can be properly defended, it does not show the weakness of the religion; on the contrary, it shows its enormous strength. A religion which made less claims would, no doubt, have less difficulties; but it would be less likely to be the true one. If God became Incarnate, no claims can be too vast for the Religion He founded.

And next, as to there being no *easier* means of proof. It is a simple matter of fact that the vast majority of men, both educated and uneducated, who believe Christianity, have not arrived at this belief through a long line of reasoning, such as is summarised in this essay. They assert that there is an easier road to it. They say that God has given them a faculty of *Faith*, which, though it may be hard to explain, just as man's free will is hard to explain, does give them the most perfect conviction of the truth of Christianity. And starting with this inward conviction, it is confirmed, they say, by their daily experience, just as a man's belief in his free will is confirmed by his daily experience; though doubtless the actual facts of life may be otherwise explained in each case. Of course, this appeal to faith is no argument to those who do not possess it. On the other hand, to those who do possess it, no arguments can appreciably weaken or strengthen it. It is a thing *sui generis*, and absolutely convincing.

It may be pointed out, however, that if man is a partly spiritual as well as a partly material being, which we have already admitted, the existence of some spiritual sense or faculty by which to appreciate spiritual truths, just as the body has material senses by which to appreciate material objects, is not on *prima facie* grounds incredible. While, if we also admit that man has at least one other sense besides his bodily senses, which is the moral sense of right and wrong, the existence of a second can scarcely be thought improbable. Still it may be said, why should some persons be given this faculty of faith, while others are not? The subject is no doubt a difficult one, but it is only part of a more general difficulty: why should any of God's

blessings be unequally distributed in this world? And yet they are. Doubtless if we knew more about man's final destiny we should see there was no real injustice in either case. But the subject need not be further considered here, since, as said above, no arguments can prove or disprove Christianity to those who believe by faith.

But now comes the most important part of the objection. Granting, it is said, that the subject is necessarily a difficult one, and demands a long investigation, yet when we do go through all the arguments on both sides, the conclusion is not irresistible. In short, why are not the evidences in favour of Christianity *stronger*? Of course they might be so, but we have no reason for thinking they would be. In our ordinary daily life we have never absolute certainty to guide us, but only various degrees of probability. Moreover, in Natural Theology the reasons for believing in a personal God and the responsibility of man, though to most persons quite convincing, are certainly not irresistible, since, as a matter of fact, some men do resist them. And if God intends us to act upon such evidence in common life, and also with regard to the great truths of Natural Theology, why should He not do the same with regard to Christianity.

The truth seems to be, that God, if we may use such a word, *respects* man's momentous attribute of free will even in matters of Religion. And while the reasons in favour both of Theism and of Christianity are amply sufficient to justify conviction, they are not sufficient to compel it. Doubtless God did not wish to make the evidence overwhelming. It may be part of man's probation in this life that the true Religion should have some difficulties attending it, just as the right line of conduct is not always evident. But for all that, there probably is a right line of conduct, and there probably is a true Religion; and if so, there are certainly strong reasons for thinking it is Christianity. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that there is no kind of evidence which the subject admits of which is not forthcoming in support of this Religion, while it has practically no competitor.

And it may be noticed in passing that the *evidences* of Chris-

tianity differ in one important respect from its *doctrines*. For its evidences, when considered as to their kind, and without reference to their degree, are precisely such as our reason would lead us to expect if the Religion were true. It was prepared for by prophecy; introduced by miracles; has influenced the world ever since; and, in addition to all external evidences, strongly appeals to human nature. On the other hand, its doctrines are admittedly not what we should have anticipated. Thus the former are level with man's understanding, while the latter are far above it. And this is just what we should expect if Christianity were a revelation from God to man. Its doctrines would be above human reason; its evidences would appeal to human reason.

And it may be added in conclusion, that both Christianity and its evidences show each of the three great Attributes of the Deity in a striking manner. Infinite *Wisdom* alone could have devised such a scheme for man's redemption and sanctification. Infinite *Power* alone could have carried it out by enabling the Illimitable to dwell in a finite human form. And Perfect *Goodness* alone, combining Beneficence with Righteousness, could have stooped so low for man's sake. While as to its evidences, God's Omnipotence is shown in the miracles; His Omniscience in the prophecies; His perfect Goodness in the character of Christ; and all three attributes combined in the providential history of Christianity. In short, this Religion is one which might very reasonably have come from the God Who is All-Powerful, All-Wise, and All-Good.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THAT THE THREE CREEDS ARE DEDUCIBLE FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

Strong *a priori* argument in favour of this ; only three Doctrines can be disputed.

(A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

In addition to the belief in God the Father, the New Testament teaches (1) the Divinity and Personality of Christ, and (2) the Divinity and Personality of the Holy Spirit ; so that (3) there are Three Divine Persons and yet but One God.

(B.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

The only part that can be disputed refers to the final state of the wicked ; but the texts in favour of their endless misery are far stronger than those in favour of their endless happiness or annihilation ; so the statement in the Creed is fully justified.

(C.) THE IMPORTANCE OF A RIGHT BELIEF.

This is strongly insisted on in the warning clauses of the Athanasian Creed.

(a.) Their meaning : they contain three distinct warnings.

(b.) Their truthfulness : they merely repeat similar warnings in the New Testament.

(c.) The objection as to Dogmatism considered in detail. Conclusion.

WE have now reached the last stage in our inquiry. We have shown in the preceding chapters that there is very strong evidence in favour of what may be called, and what we have called in a general sense, Christianity or the Christian Religion—*i.e.*, the Religion founded by Christ and taught in the New Testament. We have, lastly, to inquire, is this the Christian Religion as defined in this essay—*i.e.*, the doctrines and statements of the *Three Creeds*? To begin with, it is hardly necessary to point out the advantage of having some short summary of Christian doctrines. This was early felt and supplied, and such



a summary seems alluded to by St. Paul as the *pattern of sound words*.<sup>1</sup> But whatever this earliest form may have been—possibly what we now call the Apostles' Creed—it was found to be not precise enough to meet difficulties, and the two other Creeds were subsequently composed.

Now there is a strong *a priori* reason for thinking that these Creeds are really deducible from the New Testament, for the simple reason that they were deduced from this, and from this alone. And the fact that they were so long and so fiercely disputed by the greatest intellects of the day, and at length accepted by almost the entire Church, and solely because they were believed to be contained in the New Testament, only strengthens this conclusion. And when we add to this the fact that it seems probable that God would have guided His Church aright in such an important matter, and that this guidance is even implied by Christ Himself,<sup>2</sup> we have a very strong reason for thinking that the Three Creeds do correctly summarise the New Testament doctrines.

It must, of course, be noticed that we are now examining these doctrines from a totally different standpoint from that in Chap. xv. We then considered their antecedent *credibility*; but now admitting this, and admitting that the New Testament contains a revelation from God, we are merely seeing whether the Creeds are fairly deducible from it. And it is obvious that, while every precaution should be taken to test the credentials of an alleged messenger from God, we have often no sufficient data from which to argue as to the contents of his message. The most unlikely doctrines must therefore be at once accepted, if we are satisfied that they were revealed by God. And this greatly simplifies our inquiry, for most of the statements in the Creeds are merely copied from the New Testament, and hence they need not be discussed at all. This refers not only to the great doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement, but also to the clauses referring to the Catholic Church, Baptism, the Forgiveness of sins, and many others. There are, however, three doctrines in the Athanasian Creed which are sometimes alleged to be not con-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. 1. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 28. 20; John 16. 13.

tained in the New Testament. These are the doctrines of the *Trinity*; the *Resurrection*, or rather that portion of it referring to the final state of the wicked; and the importance of a *Right Belief*; and we will examine each in turn.

(A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

Now, though there are no statements in the New Testament identical with those in the Creed, yet the latter are merely logical deductions from the former. For the New Testament asserts that, besides God the Father, there are two other Divine Persons, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and yet but one God.

(1.) *The Divinity and Personality of Christ.* — The Divinity of Christ has been already discussed in Chap. xxi., where we showed that Christ claimed to be not only Superhuman, but Divine, asserting His Equality, Unity, and Pre-existence with God; and that this is how all His contemporaries, both friends and foes, understood Him. And the doctrine is also frequently asserted by St. Paul, as well as being implied in some of the Jewish prophecies concerning the Messiah; so that it is clear from the Bible that Christ was perfect or complete *God*. It is none the less clear that He was perfect or complete *Man*, for He suffered hunger, thirst, weariness, and even death; and in some cases His Manhood is insisted on in a way which might be thought to conflict with His Godhead.

The following are the most important instances:—"But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."<sup>1</sup> This is undoubtedly the most difficult passage, for it seems to imply that the Son is not omniscient like the Father, and I have not seen any satisfactory explanation of it. But it is anyhow quite insufficient to outweigh the mass of evidence on the other side.

"Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, even God."<sup>2</sup> The difficulty here may be at once removed by putting stress on the *thou*. Why dost thou, who art not one of My disciples, call Me good? There is none good but God, and *thou* dost not acknowledge My Godhead.

"I go unto the Father; for the Father is greater than I."

<sup>1</sup> Mark 13. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 18. 19.

And, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God."<sup>1</sup> Both these passages clearly refer to Christ's *human* nature alone, for it was in His human nature alone that He was ever absent from the Father. In His Divine nature He was of course Omnipresent, and therefore already in heaven, as He had Himself declared on a previous occasion.<sup>2</sup> These texts, then, do but support the statement in the Creed, that while Christ was equal to the Father in regard to His Godhead, He was inferior to the Father in regard to His Manhood. It should also be noticed that even here He carefully distinguishes His relationship to God from that of His disciples. Though He teaches them to say *our Father*, yet, when including Himself with them, He does not here or anywhere else say *our Father* or *our God*, but always emphasises His own peculiar position.

Two other statements of the Evangelists themselves may be noticed. St. Mark says that Christ was not *able* to do mighty works at one place; and St. Luke that He *advanced in wisdom*; which might be thought to disprove His Omnipotence and Omniscience respectively.<sup>3</sup> But the latter passage is shown by the context to refer to Christ's human nature alone; while the former seems to imply what we should call a moral impossibility, only resulting from want of faith. The statement by St. Paul that there is *one God the Father*, and *one Lord Jesus Christ*,<sup>4</sup> which is reproduced in the Nicene Creed, is also thought by some to be opposed to the Trinitarian doctrine. But though the passage is a difficult one, it cannot be pressed as implying that Christ was not *God*; for if so, it would equally imply that the Father was not *Lord*, which few would contend was St. Paul's meaning.

These passages, then, taken as a whole, merely support the previous conclusion that the Christ of the Gospels was truly Man as well as truly God. He was thus not a kind of intermediate Being, who was partly Divine and partly human, but He was wholly Divine and wholly human; or, as the Creed says, *perfect God and perfect Man*.

Lastly, as to the *union* of these Divine and human natures

<sup>1</sup> John 14. 28; 20. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Mark 6. 5; Luke 2. 52.

<sup>2</sup> John 3. 13.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. 8. 6.

(or Substances) in a single Person. This is an extremely difficult subject, though not more so than we should expect. For even man's nature, though we have so many opportunities of studying it, is still inexplicable. God's nature is, of course, still more so. And therefore the combination of both these natures in the person of Christ we should expect to be utterly beyond our comprehension. We cannot imagine how the Godhead could co-exist with the Manhood, and yet each remain complete and perfect. Moreover, we have no authoritative statement on the subject; Christ has not explained the exact relationship of His Divine and human natures, and no one else can.

But it may be pointed out that the Nicene Creed agrees with the Athanasian on this subject, for it asserts that the Son of God was made *man*, not *a man*. It was thus human nature, not a human person, that He united to Himself. And as He still retained His Divine nature, we have the union of the two natures in one Person, though expressed less clearly than in the other Creed. Of course, human nature is transmissible, but not human personality. In the case of ordinary men this nature is developed round a new person; but in the case of Christ it was developed round, or rather, as the Creed says, *taken into*, the Person of the Son of God. He thus inherited human nature with human will and affections, but yet was not a human but a Divine Person. And it was in consequence of this that He became in the truest sense the *Representative* of humanity. Had He been *a man*, He could not have represented *all* men. But by His taking human nature in the abstract, as we may say, He represented as no one else could the entire race; and this is important as explaining one aspect of His Atonement.

(2.) *The Divinity and Personality of the Holy Spirit.*—This also follows at once from the New Testament. For the Holy Spirit is called by Divine names, such as God and Lord; He is given Divine attributes, such as Eternity and Omniscience; and He is all along asserted to be the source of revelation.<sup>1</sup> And yet, on the other hand, it is equally clear that He is a distinct *Person*; for, to quote but one passage, Christ prays the

<sup>1</sup> Luke 2. 26; Acts 5. 3, 4; 28. 25; 1 Cor. 2. 10; 2 Cor. 3. 17; Heb. 9. 14.

Father to send His disciples *another* Comforter when He goes away ; thus showing that the Holy Spirit is a separate Person, both from the Father and the Son.<sup>1</sup>

The Creeds also assert that the Holy Spirit *proceeds from the Father and the Son*, which seems in opposition to John 15. 26, where He is said to proceed from the *Father*. Of course, the term *proceeds* is a very inadequate one to express the true relationship ; but as it is the one used in the New Testament, it is doubtless the least inapplicable. As is well known, the words *and the Son*, commonly called the *Filioque clause*, were not originally in the Creed, but were added by the Western Church long afterwards, the Eastern Church always condemning their insertion, though not the doctrine itself, if expressed in the form "Who proceeds from the Father *through* the Son." But though not stated in the New Testament, the fact that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father is certainly implied there. For instance, He is called, presumably because He proceeds from the Father, the Spirit of the Father ; but then He is also called the Spirit of the Son.<sup>2</sup> In the same way He is said to be both *sent* and *given* by the Father, and also by the Son.<sup>3</sup> The question is a purely theological one, and need not be further considered here.

(3.) *Three Divine Persons and yet but one God.*—It is clear, then, from the New Testament, that the Son and the Spirit are both Persons and both Divine ; and yet its whole teaching is opposed to Polytheism. On the contrary, the Unity of the Godhead is at times asserted with the utmost clearness ;<sup>4</sup> and that this is not done more frequently cannot be wondered at when we remember that the writers were Jews, to whom Monotheism was almost an axiom. Now, the only means of reconciling all this is by the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity described in the Athanasian Creed. And this is certainly hinted at in the New Testament itself, for the Three Persons are often closely associated together, and in such a way as to show their *equality* ;

<sup>1</sup> John 14. 16, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 10. 20 ; Rom. 8. 9 ; Gal. 4. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 11. 13 ; John 14. 26 ; 15. 26 ; 20. 22.

<sup>4</sup> *E.g.*, Mark 12. 29.

for who but God could be thus associated with God? For instance, we read that men are to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; St. Paul prays that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost may be with his converts; while St. Peter links together the foreknowledge of God the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the blood of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> And the first passage into the *name*, and not *names*, seems to imply not only an equality, but a *unity* in this Trinity.

Thus, to put it shortly, according to the New Testament, there are *three* distinct Persons; each is God, each is Lord, each is Eternal, each is Omniscient, each performs Divine acts, and yet there is but *One God*. This is what the Bible says, and the Creed says no more, though it says it in more scientific language.

(B.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

As said before, the only part of this which can be disputed refers to the *final state of the wicked*. But though the passage in the Creed about their going into *everlasting fire* presents great difficulties, it is copied almost verbatim from the New Testament; and this seems to settle the point.<sup>2</sup> Still, as it is often urged that this does not really represent the New Testament doctrine, we will briefly examine the subject. It will be remembered that there are only three alternatives to choose from: the endless misery of the wicked, their endless happiness, and their annihilation (Chap. xv.). And we have already considered what may be called the philosophical arguments on the subject, so we are now only dealing with the scriptural ones. And the difficulty is not caused by our having too few texts to decide by, but by our having too many, for at least twenty can be quoted in support of each theory.

And first, as to their *endless misery*. It would be difficult to exaggerate the strength of the texts in favour of this. We are told that the wicked, or at all events some of them, are to awake to shame and everlasting contempt; that they are to

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 28. 19; 2 Cor. 13. 14; 1 Peter 1. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 25. 41.

be cast into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; that they are to go away into eternal punishment; that they are guilty of an eternal sin; that their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, and that they are to be cast into the lake of fire, there to be tormented day and night for ever and ever.<sup>1</sup> The fourth of these texts is undoubtedly the most important, since the same word is used for *eternal* punishment and for *eternal* life; and therefore, though the Greek word does not necessarily mean *endless*, it certainly seems to do so here. With regard to the word *punishment*, it may be pointed out that man's diseases, &c., in this world are sometimes spoken of as God's punishments, though they come as a natural consequence of his own acts.<sup>2</sup> And therefore his future misery, though it also is called punishment, may come in the same way, rather than as an arbitrary infliction (see Chap. xv.). And as Christ speaks of an eternal sin, it is certainly possible that the endless misery of the wicked will be the natural consequence of their endless sin.

Next, as to their *endless happiness*. In favour of this we have numerous passages which seem to imply that all men will be eventually reconciled to God.<sup>3</sup> The strongest of these is undoubtedly that in Timothy, where it is said that God is the Saviour of all men, *especially* of them that believe; thus implying that He is also, though in a lesser degree, the Saviour of those who do not believe. But how are we to reconcile these passages with the far stronger texts before alluded to? The most probable solution is that they are merely general statements, indicating the final destiny of the vast majority of mankind, but that there are exceptions to this as to most other rules. Indeed, the most comprehensive passage, "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive," cannot be pressed further; for it is recorded that, strictly speaking, *all* did not die in Adam (*e.g.*, Enoch and Elijah). Moreover, there is this further difficulty: what is to become of the evil

<sup>1</sup> Dan. 12. 2; Matt. 18. 8; 25. 41, 46; Mark 3. 2; 9. 48; Rev. 14. 11; 20. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Ps. 6. 1; 39. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, Acts 3. 21; 1 Cor. 15. 22, 28; Col. 1. 20; 1 Tim. 4. 10; 1 John 2. 2; Rev. 5. 13; 22. 2.

angels and the Devil? If we are to admit endless misery for these, why not for man? And yet Scripture gives no hint that the Devil is to be eventually reconciled to God.

Lastly, as to their *annihilation*. The texts in favour of this may be divided into two groups: those which describe *eternal life* or immortality, not as the common heritage of all mankind, but as the special gift of God to the redeemed on certain conditions; and those which assert that the wicked shall be *killed* or *destroyed*.<sup>1</sup> Now killing or destroying persons is quite different from keeping them alive to punish them; and it will be noticed that in one text the death of the soul, not the body, is spoken of.

It appears, then, that while many texts can be quoted in support of each theory, those in favour of the endless misery of the wicked are by far the strongest. Indeed, the whole teaching of Scripture seems in favour of the final separation of evil from good, and not either its transformation into good or its annihilation. And that this is its apparent meaning is also shown by the fact that for many centuries most Christians believed it unhesitatingly, and simply on Scriptural grounds. The Athanasian Creed, then, in asserting this doctrine, seems fully justified. Three remarks may be made in conclusion.

And first, as to *everlasting fire*. The word *fire* can scarcely be pressed literally as meaning chemical combustion, more especially since it is often associated with another term, the *worm* that dieth not, which can scarcely be literal; and is said to have been prepared for spirits, the evil angels, who have no bodies. Still it doubtless implies some form of intense misery. And as to *everlasting*, it seems that it must be admitted to mean endless. No doubt it is difficult for us to imagine, but then our finite minds are not capable of understanding an infinity of time or anything else. Indeed, the endless existence of persons at all, either in heaven or anywhere else, is hard to realise.

Secondly, as to *numbers*. The Creed says nothing to warrant the common idea that the majority of mankind will be finally

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Matt. 10. 28; John 6. 51; 17. 3; Rom. 6. 23; Heb. 2. 14.



lost; it may be only a few obstinate sinners. Of course some texts may be quoted in favour of the other view; but it seems most improbable that God should be unable to win the majority of the men He created to Himself. And if it be urged that most men when they die do not, in popular language, seem good enough for heaven, it is equally true that they seem too good for hell. But a right idea of the *Intermediate State* removes this difficulty, since it affords a time of purification and development, which even the best of men seem to require before they are fit for the immediate presence of God. Moreover, the *Intermediate State* may also meet the case of the heathen. They have had no probation in this life, no chance of accepting salvation; and yet, on the one hand, they could scarcely be saved without believing in Christ, while, on the other, they could scarcely be condemned if they had had no chance of believing. Possibly the Gospel may be preached to them in the *Intermediate State*, as it was by Christ Himself to those before His time.<sup>1</sup> All this taken together seems to remove the difficulty as to numbers.

Lastly, we may be sure of this: in the future world rewards and punishments will be in exact proportion to what is merited. Every one will be equitably dealt with; every merciful allowance will be made for circumstances, including the inherent weakness of human nature. Christianity indeed seems to emphasise this more than any other religion, since men are to be judged not by the Father, but by the Son; apparently for the very reason that, being Man Himself, He can sympathise with human weakness.<sup>2</sup> And after the judgment, persons will enjoy heaven just in proportion as their lives on earth have rendered them capable of doing so, while the misery of the lost will also be in exact proportion to what they deserve.

(C.) THE IMPORTANCE OF A RIGHT BELIEF.

The last doctrine to be considered is that of the importance of a Right Belief. This is strongly insisted on in some of the *warning clauses* of the Athanasian Creed; and as in Chap. xv. we did not even discuss the credibility of this doctrine, we

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 3. 19.

<sup>2</sup> John 5. 27.

must examine it at some length. And we will first consider the meaning of these clauses, then their truthfulness, and lastly, the objection as to dogmatism.

(a.) *The meaning of these clauses.*

Before discussing this, it may be pointed out that they are often called the *damnatory* or *uncharitable* clauses; but both these terms are somewhat misleading. For the Church does not profess to condemn any one by these clauses, but merely declares that certain persons will be condemned by God, which is a very different thing. The Church does not desire their condemnation, but the contrary; and therefore, believing the danger to be a fact, it is stated in the hope that persons may in consequence avoid it. An analogy may help to illustrate this distinction. Suppose a despotic ruler in some island were to put up a notice that any one walking along a certain part of the coast would be shot; this might well be called uncharitable. But now, suppose the notice was that, owing to there being quicksands along that part of the coast, any one walking there would be drowned; this might be untrue, but it could scarcely be called uncharitable. Indeed, if the ruler thought there was any danger, it would be distinctly charitable to put up a warning. And similarly with the Athanasian Creed. Its warnings, if true, should certainly be made known to every one; and if untrue, they do not show any want of charity on the part of the Church, though in this case they would of course be needless. They are also quite different from the so-called imprecatory Psalms, where the writer does not merely state that the wicked will be miserable, but prays that they may be so.<sup>1</sup> This no doubt seems uncharitable, but there is nothing corresponding to it in the Creed.

Now, when carefully examined, it will be seen that these clauses mean something very different from what they are often assumed to do. The clauses are six in number, and they contain three distinct warnings.

*First warning.*—"Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith" (v. 1).

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Ps. 109.

"He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity" (v. 28).

"Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 29).

"This is the Catholic Faith: which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved" (v. 42).

Now the obvious meaning of these clauses is, that holding the Catholic Faith is essential to salvation. But as the Latin words of the first verse are, *Quicumque vult salvus esse*, which mean literally *whoever wishes to be safe*, two attempts have been made to avoid this conclusion. The first is by laying stress on *salvus*, which only means *safe*, and hence need not refer to final salvation at all. But its meaning here must obviously be the same as that in v. 29, where the salvation is expressly said to be everlasting. The other expedient is by laying stress on *vult*, which undoubtedly means *wishes*, and hence it is urged this verse does not assert that those who do not hold the Faith cannot be saved, though it may be inferred that their position is a dangerous one. In the same way, if a lifeboat goes to rescue a sinking ship, all who wish to be saved must get into the lifeboat, though it does not follow that every one else will be drowned. But here, again, the meaning must be the same as that in v. 42, which is incapable of this restricted sense. Of course, it may be replied that the first verse really expresses the sense in which a right belief is thought to be necessary, and that in the latter verses this is omitted; and there are certainly some arguments in favour of this view. But it seems better to take the words in their more obvious sense, which is, that holding the Catholic Faith is essential to salvation.

*Second warning.*—"Which Faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly" (v. 2).

The word *keep* necessarily implies previous possession. A man cannot keep what he never had; so this clause is obviously inapplicable to heathens, infidels, or even nominal Christians who have never really held the Catholic Faith. It refers only to apostates—to those who, having once held the Faith, do not

keep it whole and undefiled ; and these, the Creed says, shall without doubt perish everlastingly.

*Third warning.*—“And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil into everlasting fire” (v. 41).

Here, it will be noticed, the final separation is to be made solely according to works ; and it appears from the previous verse that this applies to *all men*, no matter whether they have kept the Faith or not. It would be unfair, however, to press this literally, since it would contradict the other statements of the Creed as to the necessity of holding the Catholic Faith. It can, therefore, only refer to those who have kept the Faith ; they, the Creed says, shall be judged according to their works.

These then are all the warning clauses ; and it need only be added that the Creed nowhere says or implies that belief in all these clauses themselves is essential to salvation, but only belief in the Doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, &c. If, as a matter of fact, a man believes these doctrines, then, according to the Creed, he is on the road to salvation, whether he considers this belief of paramount importance or not. And this is actually the case with a large number of professing Christians. They believe all that the Creed says, except the warning clauses, the belief in which, however, is not asserted to be necessary.

(b.) *The truthfulness of these clauses.*

Having now shown what the warning clauses actually mean, we have next to consider whether they are true. To begin with, they are certainly *credible*. For if God gave a revelation to man, that the only safe course would be for man to believe it is obvious, and that God might make final salvation dependent on his doing so is not unlikely. Secondly, that any one who apostatises from the faith should perish everlastingly is certainly not incredible, even if we think it unlikely. While, thirdly, that those who do hold the Faith should be judged according to their works is extremely probable.

The question of future misery has been already discussed, but it may be pointed out here that no threat whatever is contained in the Creed as to those who do not believe the faith,

except the merely negative one that they cannot be saved ; and that even apostasy from the faith only leads to perishing everlastingly, which we are not justified in assuming is the same as going into everlasting fire. The meaning of the words would be quite satisfied by Annihilation, which indeed they seem to imply. So that the only threat of *endless misery* in the Creed refers not to those who do not believe the Faith, or even apostatise from it, but to those who, having known and believed the faith, yet choose to lead an *evil life*. These, the Creed says, and by implication these alone, are to go into everlasting fire.

Passing on now to the *truth* of the doctrine, it is plain from the nature of the case that man can know nothing on such a subject, except what is revealed by God. Is then this doctrine stated or implied in the New Testament ? Certainly it is, since we find that belief in Christ is everywhere laid down as essential to salvation. For example (to quote but six texts, which have been purposely selected from as many different writings) we are told that while he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that disbelieveth shall be condemned ; that unless men believe in Christ they shall die in their sins ; that His is the only Name under heaven wherein men can be saved ; that public confession of Him as Lord, together with belief in His Resurrection, leads to salvation ; that if any one, even an angel from heaven, preaches another Gospel, he is to be anathema ; and that whoever confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and that whoever denies it is not of God.<sup>1</sup>

Now, though not stated, it is obvious that the belief in Christ here insisted on, which includes His Divinity, Incarnation, and Resurrection, must mean believing the truth about Christ, and not a false belief. If, then, the statements in the Creed represent the truth about Christ, as we have shown they do, then belief in these is essential to salvation. And the truth about Christ necessarily includes His relationship to God the Father, *i.e.*, the doctrine of the Trinity. The warning clauses as to the importance of a right belief are thus fully justified by Scripture ;

<sup>1</sup> Mark 16. 16 ; John 8. 24 ; Acts 4. 12 ; Rom. 10. 9 ; Gal. 1. 8 ; 1 John 4. 2. 3.

including, it may be added, those which seem to assign a worse fate to Christians who lead bad lives than to unbelievers.<sup>1</sup>

And it may be noticed in corroboration of this Christian doctrine that it fully explains a most remarkable omission in the Old Testament. The Mosaic Laws, as is well known, contain no reference to a future life; and yet this was a most prominent doctrine in the Egyptian religion, from which the Jewish was so largely derived. It cannot therefore have been unknown or accidentally left out, but was evidently a designed omission. And to any Theist who believes in a future life, such an omission is most remarkable. But Christianity has the key to this as to most other difficulties connected with the Jewish religion. Eternal happiness was never promised to the Jews, because the means of obtaining it (belief in Christ) were not then within their reach, though very possibly such means were afforded them in the Intermediate State. This is one of those *secret harmonies*, as they are called, which the comparative study of the Bible so often reveals.

Three further remarks may be made before leaving these warning clauses. The first is that the Athanasian Creed is obviously addressed to *Christians* only. This is clear not only from its history, for it was composed solely for Christians, but also from the opening sentence, "Whosoever *wishes to be saved*," which takes for granted that the persons addressed have heard of salvation. It cannot therefore be held to refer to any but Christians, no matter how general the language may be. In the same way a proclamation by an earthly sovereign might contain the words *every man*, but they would only refer to the king's own subjects and not to foreigners. And among Christians the Creed is intended primarily for theologians, as is plain from its technical language, and it seems only fair to assume that unlearned persons belonging to a Church holding these doctrines would be considered as believing them, unless they actually disbelieved them.

Secondly, the statements in the Creed are only *general rules*; and here as elsewhere there may be exceptions to such rules.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* Luke 12. 47, 48; 1 Tim. 5. 8.

Of course it may be said that these ought to be hinted at in the Creed itself, and doubtless many would prefer this being done. But strictly speaking the Church has no authority to make any exceptions to God's rules, though God Himself can of course do so. She can only repeat the message given to her in the New Testament, that a true belief in Christ is essential to salvation, though she may both hope and believe that God will make exceptions wherever unbelief or misbelief has not been due to a person's own fault.

Lastly, it seems certain that persons *in heaven* must believe the truth about God. Indeed, we can scarcely imagine them holding erroneous ideas on such a subject. And it is at least as reasonable to suppose that they would learn the truth here or in the Intermediate State, as that they would be taught it in heaven itself. If, then, the statements in the Creed do represent the truth about God, and if persons who go to heaven must believe the truth about God, it follows as a logical necessity that no person can go to heaven who does not believe these statements; in other words, that except a man believe the Catholic Faith he cannot be saved. Our conclusion, then, as to the warning clauses is this, that if the other statements in the Creed are true, these clauses do not present any great difficulty.

(c.) *The objection as to dogmatism.*

An important objection has still to be considered. It is that the Athanasian Creed *dogmatizes* too much. Granting, it is said, that all its doctrines are deducible from the New Testament, yet why not be content with the *simpler* statements in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds? These were *sufficient* for the Church for several centuries, so why not leave other matters open for discussion, instead of treating them as *closed questions*? We will consider these four points in turn.

And first as to *dogmatism*. Christian dogmatism has been well defined as *devotion to truth for truth's sake*; since what but a love of truth could induce men to argue about such questions as the *Filioque* clause? And truth, it should be noticed, is necessarily exclusive. If I believe a certain statement to be true, it is not uncharitable, but merely logical, to say that every

statement inconsistent with it is false, and that all who believe such statements believe falsehood instead of truth. Now on every other subject which influences our conduct, *e.g.*, diseases, science, &c., it is admitted to be of great importance that we should know the truth and act accordingly. Why then should it be thought that in Religion alone this is immaterial, and that a false Creed is as good as the true one, if a man honestly believes it?

Moreover, a certain amount of dogmatism in matters of Religion seems essential. No man can intelligently serve or pray to a God of whose nature he has formed no conception, and the moment he begins to form such a conception he is beset by difficulties. Take for example what some will consider the simplest possible prayer, *May God forgive my sins for Christ's sake*. Who, we may ask, is God; who is Christ; what is the relation between them; why should One be asked to forgive for the sake of the Other; and what would happen if the sins were not forgiven? Such difficulties cannot be avoided; and if the statements in the Athanasian Creed are their true solution, the more clearly this is stated the better, no matter how difficult they may be.

In the next place, it is very doubtful whether the earlier Creeds are *simpler* and more easy to believe than the Athanasian. To a thoughtful reader it may well seem otherwise. For example, referring to the Trinity, the Nicene Creed first asserts that there is one God the Father, and soon afterwards it says that the Son is also God. And so in regard to the Holy Spirit, He is called the Lord, and yet it has been already stated that there is only one Lord Jesus Christ. How can all this be reconciled? And much the same applies to the future state of the wicked. The two earlier Creeds assert the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting; and assuming that both the good and the bad share in the Resurrection, do they both share in the life everlasting? If they do, what advantage have the good over the bad; and if they do not, what is to become of the bad? These and many other questions are suggested by the earlier Creeds, and answered, in so far as an answer is possible, by the Athanasian. And to many it seems easier to



believe the Creed which answers difficulties, than those which merely suggest them.

And it was for this very purpose of answering difficulties, not making them, that the Athanasian Creed was composed. The Church had found that it was asking too much to expect men to believe the bare statements of the earlier Creeds without explanation or comment. Men would have them explained, or else would explain them for themselves. And it was to prevent their doing this wrongly that the true explanation was formally adopted by the Church.

The Athanasian Creed, then, was not composed for the sake of asserting any new doctrines, still less as implying that those previously received were not *sufficient*, but merely to prevent them from being misunderstood or denied. And there was a danger of this, because a great truth, such as the Divinity of Christ, has many necessary deductions which are not apparent at first sight. But yet when once they are suggested and discussed, they must be accepted, or else the great truth itself will be virtually denied. Moreover, as we have already shown, all the doctrines are really contained in the New Testament, and they were in consequence always believed by the Church. But it was not till after much controversy that the Church learnt to express this belief with clearness and precision. In the same way a child may be quite certain that he has free will, but it may be some years before he is able to express this belief with clearness, and in such a way as to meet objections.

And lastly, as to these doctrines being *closed questions*. They are closed questions in much the same way as the Copernican theory of the universe is a closed question. That is to say, they have been thoroughly discussed, and (to those who believe the New Testament) the balance of probability is overwhelmingly in their favour. Of course any one may go over the proofs again for himself, and if he wants to have an intelligent belief he should do so; but as a rule of conduct the subject cannot be reopened.

And it should be noticed that the Church, in thus treating certain questions as closed for her members, is only acting as other societies would do. Would a society of engineers, for

instance, allow one of their members to construct an iron bridge on the supposition that the expansion of iron by heat was an open question, which he might, or might not, think worth allowing for? Or would a society of doctors allow one of their members to attend patients if he asserted that whether scarlet fever was infectious or not was an open question, which each patient might decide for himself? In short, well-ascertained truth, or what is believed to be such, in every department of knowledge, is looked upon as a closed question; and it must remain so, unless some important fresh evidence is produced. But with regard to the Creeds, no fresh evidence can be produced, unless God were to give a fresh Revelation. And therefore from the nature of the case they are closed questions in an even stricter sense than ascertained truths on other subjects.

This concludes a brief examination of the doctrines contained in the Three Creeds, and all of them are either contained in, or logically deducible from, the New Testament.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THAT THEREFORE THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS EXTREMELY PROBABLE

WE have now examined all the more important arguments for and against Christianity. Many of them, as we have seen, are of great complexity, and we have often been obliged to consider a few examples only of various classes of facts; but it is hoped that no important argument on either side has been entirely overlooked. It only remains to give a summary of the previous chapters, and then to point out the final choice of difficulties.

In Chap. xv. we considered the *credibility* of the Christian Religion, and decided that some of its leading doctrines, especially those referring to the Incarnation and the Atonement, seemed on *à priori* grounds most improbable. This is what may be called the *philosophical* objection to Christianity. All that can be said on the other side is practically this, that we have no adequate means of judging; and that when we apply similar reasoning to subjects about which we do know, such as the freedom of man or the existence of evil, it generally leads us wrong. But still the fact remains that the Religion appears most improbable.

In Chap. xvi. we considered the *external testimony* to the *Four Gospels*, and decided that there was extremely strong testimony in favour of their traditional authorship. At the close of the second century they held the same place among Christians as they do at present; during the middle of that century Justin shows that they were publicly read, together with the Old Testament Scriptures; while the few earlier writers whose works have come down to us also seem to have known them.

In Chap. xvii. we considered their *internal evidence*, and found that it strongly supported the above conclusion ; so that combining the two, we have an almost overwhelming argument in favour of their genuineness. On the other hand, the only important reason for disputing this is because of their miraculous contents, but in an inquiry like the present this is plainly begging the question.

In Chap. xviii. we considered the testimony borne by these Gospels to the *Resurrection of Christ*, and we decided that it had every appearance of being thoroughly trustworthy. The testimony was subjected to the most minute and searching inquiry, the Veracity, Knowledge, Investigation, and Reasoning of the witnesses being separately considered ; and each was found to be supported by what seemed to be irresistible evidence. Here again, then, the choice lies between accepting this evidence or disputing it, in defiance of all the rules of probability, and solely because of the miraculous nature of the event vouched for.

In Chap. xix. we considered the other New Testament *Miracles*, and came to the conclusion that they also were probably true. Indeed, from their alleged publicity, together with the fact that their occurrence was, as far as we know, never disputed at the time, either by Jews or heathens, the evidence in their favour is extremely strong.

In Chap. xx. we considered the argument from *Prophecy*, and showed that there were general prophecies in the Old Testament of some future Messiah, who should be not only a Conqueror, but also a Sufferer ; whilst at times He is stated to be Divine. And we then examined in detail two of the actual predictions referring to this Messiah, selecting a strong example from Isaiah, and a comparatively weak one from Daniel. These prophecies and predictions form together a most remarkable series ; many of them even singly cannot be satisfactorily explained except as referring to Christ, while in Him they are all fulfilled. Here again, then, the choice lies between accepting these predictions or disputing them, simply because they are predictions, and must imply a Divine Revelation. In other words, we must face the philosophical difficulty of believing that the coincidences between the prophecies and their fulfilment were all designed,

or else what we may call the *mental* difficulty of believing that they were all accidental.

In Chap. xxi. we considered the *Character of Christ*, and found that this also afforded strong evidence in favour of Christianity. For the admitted excellence of Christ's moral character seems quite inconsistent with deliberate falsehood on His part. And yet He kept asserting His superhuman and Divine nature with the utmost emphasis, and was finally put to death in consequence. Here then once more we have the same choice before us; we must either face the philosophical difficulty of believing in Christ's Divinity, or else the *moral* difficulty of believing that the best moral teaching the world has ever seen was the outcome of a life saturated with falsehood and presumption.

In Chap. xxii. we considered the *History of Christianity*, and found that its marvellous progress at first, in spite of its tremendous difficulties, and without the use of any force, could only be accounted for by its truth. So here for the last time we have the same alternatives to choose from. We must either face the philosophical difficulty of believing in the supernatural origin and spread of Christianity, or else the *historical* difficulty of believing that its first preachers were able to convince men without evidence, conquer them without force, and found the greatest kingdom the world has ever seen on claims which at the time every one must have known to be untrue.

In Chap. xxiii. we considered the *other evidence* on the subject, and glanced at various arguments for and against Christianity, such as its connection with the Bible, its adaptation to human nature, and its relation to other religions; but all of comparative unimportance.

Lastly, in Chap. xxiv. we decided that the *Three Creeds* are deducible from the New Testament; so that the religion which has all this evidence in its favour is the Christian religion as here defined.

From the above summary it will be seen that there is only one important argument against Christianity, and this is the *philosophical* one. The Religion itself, its doctrines, its claims, its miraculous origin, all seem most improbable. Thus the objections to Christianity all lie on the surface. They are

obvious and palpable to every one. On the **other hand**, the arguments in its favour have often to be sought for ; but when found, they are seen to be stronger and stronger the more they are examined. There are four main arguments. These are of a widely different character, and each appeals most strongly to a certain class of minds, so each is often spoken of as the chief argument for Christianity, but they are probably of equal value. They may be conveniently called the argument from *Miracles*, from *Prophecy*, from *Christ's Character*, and from *History*.

Now it is important to remember that the actual facts on which these arguments rest are in each case absolutely *unique*. Once, and only once in the history of the world, have men appeared who asserted that they were actual witnesses of miracles, and who faced all forms of suffering and death solely in consequence of this. Again, once, and only once in the history of the world, has a long series of apparently incongruous Prophecies and Predictions, uttered many centuries apart, united in a single Person, in whom they one and all find a complete fulfilment. Yet again, once, and only once in the history of the world, has a Man appeared of faultless moral character, who asserted that He was also God, and who boldly claimed all that this stupendous assertion involved, and submitted to the consequences. While lastly, once, and only once in the history of the world, has a Religion, most improbable in itself, and without using any force, succeeded in conquering nation after nation.

These then are the four chief arguments on the subject, and in every case we have the same choice before us. We must either face the philosophical difficulties in accepting Christianity, or the mental, moral, and historical difficulties in rejecting it. There is no neutral ground, no possibility of avoiding both sets of difficulties. But the difficulties on the one side concern what we do *not* know—God's purpose in creating man—and may be due to our ignorance only. The difficulties on the other side concern what we *do* know. They are practical, they are derived from experience. We do know that men will not lay down their lives for what they believe to be false, and that the first preachers of Christianity must have known

whether it was false or not. We do know that prophecies uttered at random through centuries would not all unite in a single Person. We do know that even moderately good men do not make extravagant claims. And we do know that no natural causes can account for such a religion as Christianity obtaining such a triumph as it did.

The choice, then, seems to lie between what we may call *unknown* difficulties and *known* ones. The unknown difficulty of believing that the Infinite God could so love man as to humble Himself even to death to win man's love; and the known difficulty of believing that evidence so vast and so various, so cumulative and so apparently irresistible, could all unite in making a monstrous falsehood appear to be a momentous truth. Between these two sets of difficulties we have to make our choice. But to those who agree with the previous chapters of this essay the choice cannot be doubtful. For here, as with Theism, our beliefs must follow the line of least resistance; and, as we have shown, however hard it is to believe Christianity, it is harder still to disbelieve it. This, then, is our final conclusion, that the truth of the Christian religion is *extremely probable*, because, to put it shortly, though the difficulties of accepting Christianity are great, the difficulties of rejecting it are far greater.





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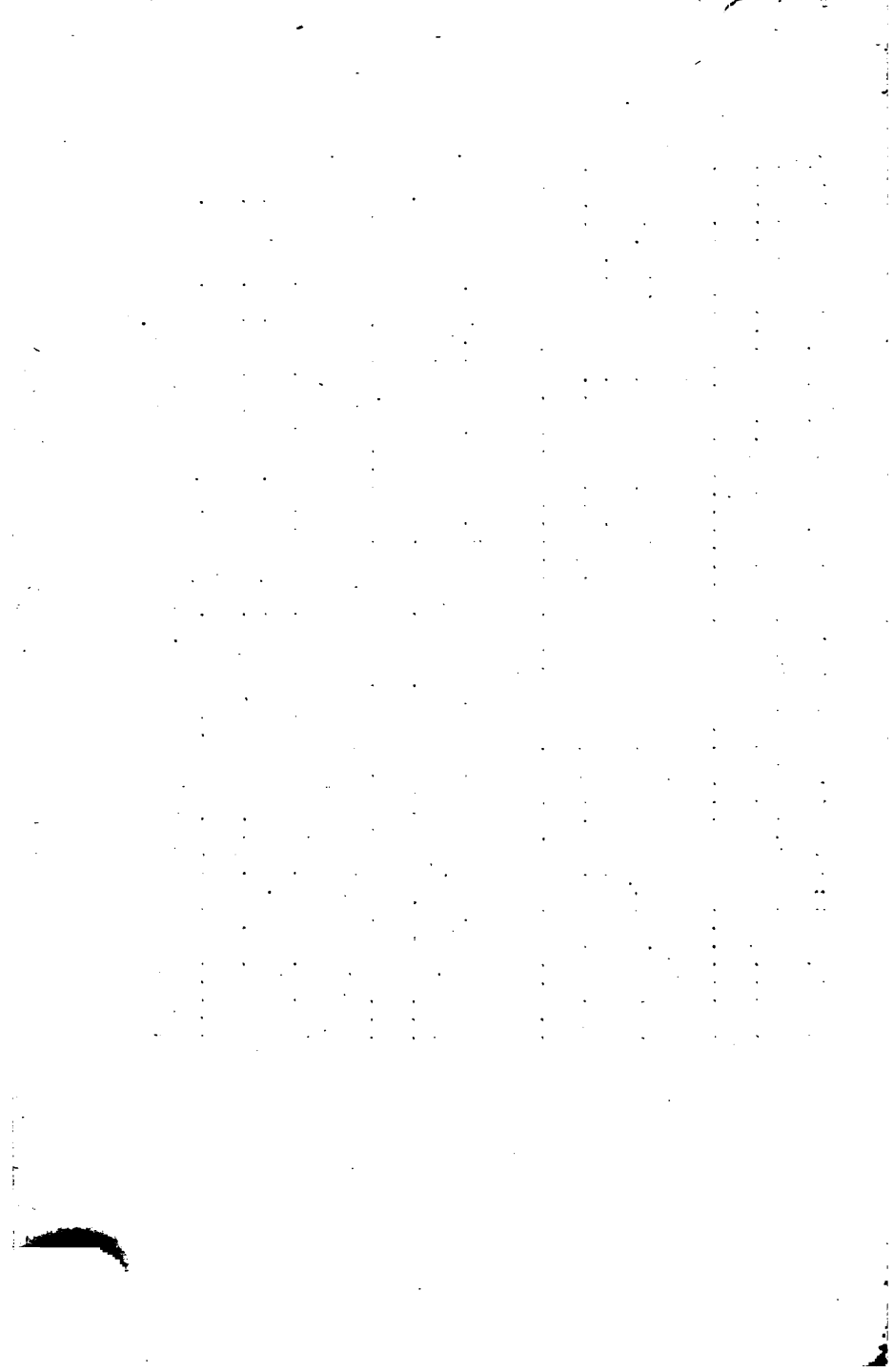
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